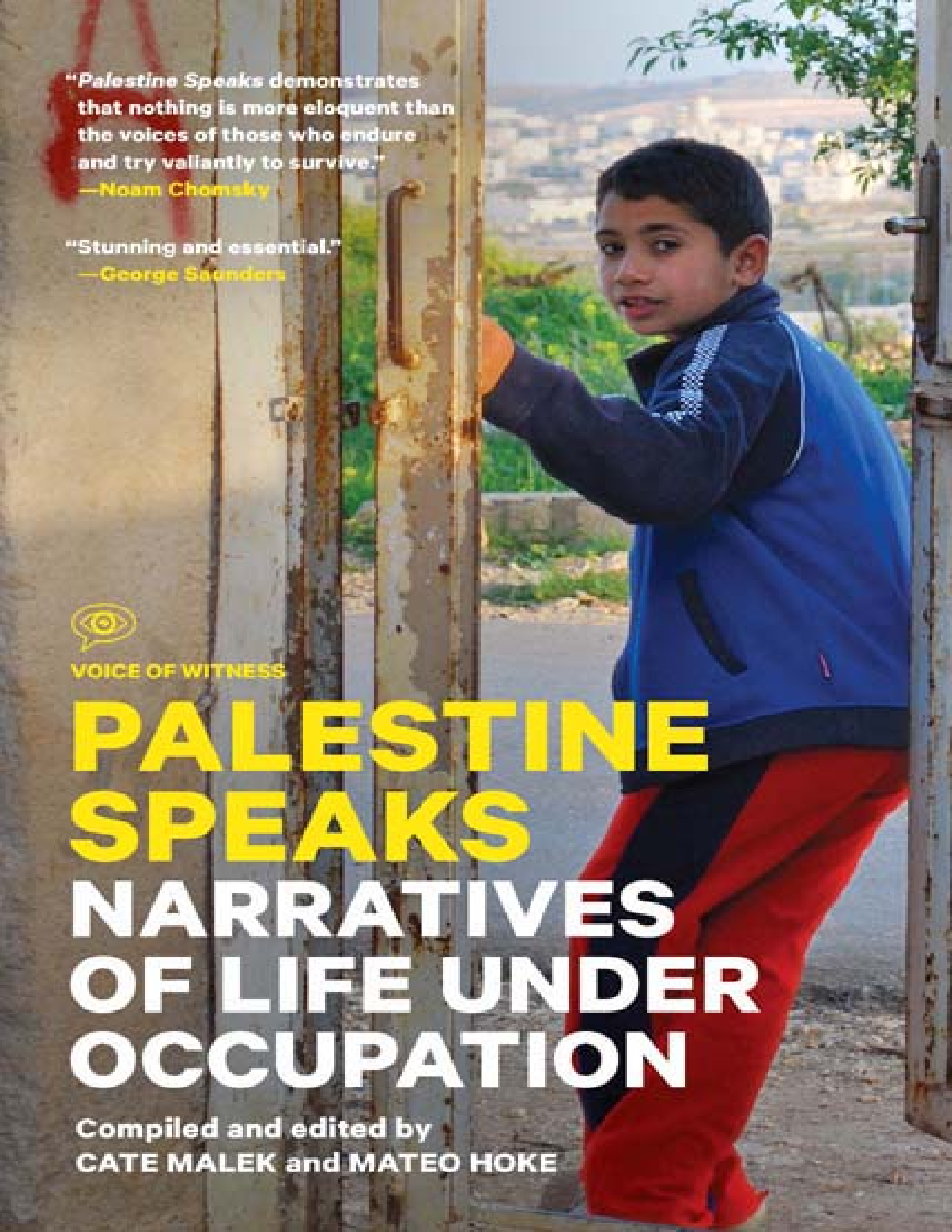


"*Palestine Speaks* demonstrates that nothing is more eloquent than the voices of those who endure and try valiantly to survive."
—Noam Chomsky

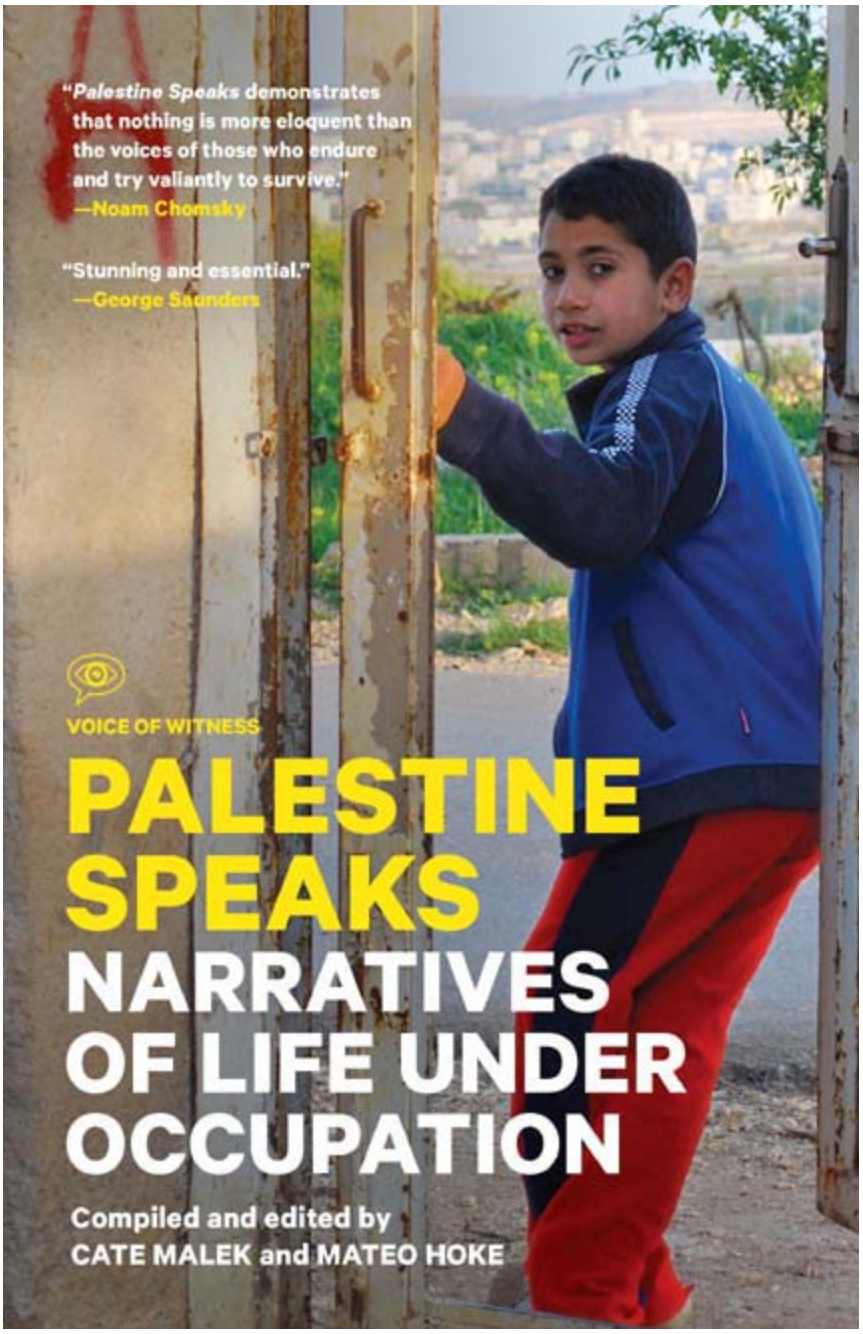
"Stunning and essential."
—George Saunders

VOICE OF WITNESS

PALESTINE SPEAKS

NARRATIVES OF LIFE UNDER OCCUPATION

Compiled and edited by
CATE MALEK and MATEO HOKE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This book goes out to everyone fighting to be seen, heard, or simply recognized as human.

VOICE OF WITNESS

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VOICE OF WITNESS

Voice of Witness is a non-profit organization that uses oral history to illuminate contemporary human rights crises in the U.S. and around the world. Its book series depicts these injustices through the oral histories of the men and women who experience them. The Voice of Witness Education Program brings these stories, and the issues they reflect, into high schools and impacted communities through oral history-based curricula and holistic educator support. Visit www.voiceofwitness.org for more information.

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INTRODUCTION

BETWEEN US BREAD AND SALT

by Cate Malek and Mateo Hoke

Crossing into the West Bank requires passing through a series of barriers. For example, to get from Jerusalem into neighboring Bethlehem means navigating a twenty-six-foot concrete wall that spans the horizon. To pass through on foot, individuals must walk through a maze of security screenings known as “Checkpoint 300,” one of numerous heavily guarded crossing points set up along the 440-mile-long, partially constructed barrier snaking through the West Bank.

As one approaches Checkpoint 300 from Jerusalem, the landscape is green, almost idyllic, filled with olive trees, wild flowers, and the occasional grazing sheep. But closer to the wall, in a militarized no-man’s-land, trash and barbed wire litter the sides of the road. The checkpoint itself is marked by a squat concrete and metal structure. At the entrance to the checkpoint is a large red sign warning Israeli citizens that entering Area A —the small portion of territory within the West Bank controlled by Palestinians—is against Israeli law, and “dangerous to [their] lives.”

Beyond the Checkpoint 300 is a room, often filled to capacity, that feeds into pedestrian screening lines. Above these screening lines are metal walkways, and looking up, pedestrians sometimes find soldiers peering down at them, guns in hand, boots directly overhead. The first screening station is an ID check. Here, Palestinians must record their thumbprints electronically to prove they haven’t overstayed day-long work permits. International travelers need only show their passports. Pedestrians then go through a long passageway, a monitored turnstile, a large empty parking lot, one more ID check, another monitored turnstile, and another long passageway before finally spilling out near Bethlehem.

Compared to the eerie austerity of the checkpoint, Bethlehem is pulsing with life. Taxi drivers, dwarfed by the wall behind them, offer rides to the

people coming through the crossing. Vendors call out the prices of fruit and sweets. People stop to greet friends or buy cups of coffee. On this side, the wall itself is coated in layers of colorful graffiti.

The contrast between the grim realities of the wall and the brisk liveliness outside of it was one of the things that first struck us about the West Bank. Cate moved to Bethlehem in 2009 to work for a non-profit tourism group that offered walking trips throughout the West Bank, as well as other regions in the Middle East. As part of her job, she traveled on foot through major cities and rural villages, meeting Palestinians from countless different backgrounds. Cate had previously worked with Mateo on an in-depth human rights story, and the two soon realized that Cate's newfound connections in the West Bank could be the beginning of a powerful new reporting project.

Our aim from the start was to try and better understand the ways that life continues in the West Bank and Gaza despite a military occupation spanning generations.

Approaching Palestine as outsiders was a considerable challenge but also proved to be one of the strengths of the project. We sought out stories that might surprise us, so that we might also surprise our readers—no matter their backgrounds or knowledge of the region. Life in Palestine is astonishingly diverse, complex, and often contradictory. Hope flourishes right alongside stark cynicism and despair, and we found that many of the human rights abuses in Palestine take place in the mundane details of daily life. Simple things like traveling to work, sending children to school, or planning weddings can all be severely impacted by Israel's ongoing occupation of the Palestinian territories. In Western media, West Bank home demolitions and missile strikes in Gaza make headlines, but rarely are they presented in the context of everyday Palestinian life.

Even during times of relative peace, Palestinian lives are complicated in countless ways. In addition to the checkpoints and barrier walls, a feeling of insecurity permeates nearly every facet of Palestinian society. It's difficult for most Palestinians to find jobs, and of those that are available, most are low paying, menial, or dangerous. Palestinians face a continuous barrage of restrictions that include food, water, and electrical shortages; state repression of speech; detention and torture; forced evacuation; and the

demolition of homes and family farms. Palestinian life is often one of forced indignity.

In the West Bank, Palestinians face a lack of mobility imposed by over five hundred checkpoints and roadblocks (like the 300 Checkpoint mentioned above) and a high unemployment rate. Thousands of men cross into Israel every day to find work. If these men cross legally with required permits, it means waking up at one a.m. in order to make it through crowded and demeaning checkpoints in time to start work at eight a.m. If they go illegally, they risk being arrested or shot as they walk long distances in order to cross the unsecured border areas between the West Bank and Israel. Since Palestine is not a state and residents don't have citizenship, Palestinians can lose their residency rights and homes with little or no warning. Israeli soldiers come in the middle of the night to arrest family members, often without charges. School is often canceled due to strikes, protests, or clashes with soldiers. Palestinian governance is often corrupt, ineffective, and suspicious of signs of dissidence. Basic necessities such as water and electricity are in short supply. This is especially true in Gaza, but it's also common to run out of water in the West Bank toward the end of the summer, which means many hot and sweaty weeks without the ability to shower, do laundry, or flush toilets.

In the Gaza Strip, life is dire. As we go to press, the Israeli military continues its latest ground invasion of Gaza as part of its ongoing conflict with Hamas and Gazan militias. More than 2,100 Palestinians have been killed and over 9,000 injured—the majority of them civilians (four Israeli civilians and sixty Israeli soldiers have also been killed). This latest clash follows two other military operations since Israeli forces first left the Gaza Strip in 2005. In 2008, Israel reacted to Gazan rocket fire into its territory by initiating twenty-two days of bombings. The UN estimates that 1,400 Palestinians were killed and 300,000 people lost their homes (three Israeli civilians and ten Israeli soldiers were also killed). Israel again bombed Gaza in 2012, once again citing rockets fired into Israel, as well as other attacks from Gaza.

But even in times of relative calm, Gazans face horrifying conditions. Due to an Israeli-built barrier wall, Gaza is essentially the world's largest internment site. The wall ensures that Gaza's residents cannot freely leave, and the blockade of goods means that critical supplies such as food,

medicine, fuel, and construction material cannot enter. Eight out of ten Gazans are dependent on foreign aid to survive, and human and civil rights remain under constant attack, with both Israeli and Gazan government actions continuing to demoralize and economically suffocate the entirety of the Gaza Strip.

But these hardships are not the end of the story. Despite enormous deprivations, life goes on for Palestinians, much as it has for generations. Education is highly valued, and Palestine has the highest literacy rate in the Arab world at more than 95 percent. Religion is also important for many Palestinians. Weekends are often devoted to large family meals and weddings. There's an easy intimacy among friends and strangers alike. And, as we quickly discovered, Palestinians pride themselves on their hospitality, welcoming guests extravagantly.

All the narrators in this book felt it was deeply important to tell their stories. An example is Muhanned Al-Azzah, one of the first people we interviewed. When we headed into the Al-Azzah refugee camp to meet Muhanned on a cold morning in January 2011, we knew little about him. We'd heard from our contacts in the city that he was an artist, that he had a history of political activism, and that he'd been arrested by the Israeli army. We also knew that the refugee camp where he lived was named for his grandparents, who had led their community in a flight to Bethlehem after their village was razed in 1948. But we didn't know how much of his personal story he'd be willing to share with a pair of journalists from the United States.

We climbed an outdoor staircase, past socks and towels hung to dry on a railing, to the third floor of Muhanned's house. Muhanned's mother answered the door. She ushered us into the living room and cheerfully explained that Muhanned was still asleep. He came in a few minutes later, a man in his late twenties with a lean face and dark beard. He shuffled around the room in sweats, looking for his cigarettes. On his feet were fuzzy pink slippers, and strutting behind him was a Chihuahua—not exactly our preconceived notion of a political prisoner.

Muhanned took time warming up to us, speaking in short, vague answers to start. It went on like this for a while. Then, Muhanned's mom brought in a tray of cookies and instant coffee with plenty of sugar and milk. The coffee was a welcome addition to our conversation. Not only did

it keep us warm, it relaxed things. Our conversation started to flow more easily. Soon Muhanned was sharing stories with us of his childhood in a refugee camp, his harrowing arrest, and his time in prison.

Those cups of milky instant coffee were the first of hundreds of cups of coffee, glasses of lemonade, and plates of *maklouba* (a traditional chicken and rice dish) we would share with people over the course of putting this book together. There is a saying in Arabic, *beynatna khubz wah milah*, which means, "between us bread and salt." It is a nod to the deep tradition of hospitality in this region, and means that once people share a meal together, they have a foundation for friendship.

One reason it was so important for our narrators to share their stories is that Palestinians have reached a particularly desperate time in their history. Most of the interviews for this book were conducted between 2011 and 2014. During this period, negotiations with Israel remained deadlocked, while the hopes of residents in the West Bank and Gaza continued to deteriorate. We completed our last round of substantive interviews in early summer 2014, weeks before the July 2014 Israeli invasion of Gaza. We continued to stay in contact with our narrators, and in some instances we have included postscripts describing the disastrous impact that the most recent bombing has had on their lives.

Though our narrators were all eager to share their stories, this book can be little more than a glimpse into Palestinian life and culture. In an area of land the size of Delaware, Palestinians speak numerous regional dialects. The landscape itself is extremely variable, moving from deserts, to green hill country, to the Mediterranean coast. To say that Palestinians are a diverse people would be a vast understatement. Over the course of this project, we spoke in depth with more than seventy individuals and conducted over one hundred interviews. From that pool of interviews, we chose sixteen stories that we believe offer a diverse, challenging look at the past and present of Palestinian life. We focused our attention on those living in occupied Palestine—here defined as Gaza and the West Bank (including East Jerusalem)—though in doing so we've left out important stories from Arab-Israeli citizens, Palestinian refugees living in other states, and the stories of many international aid workers who pass through Palestine each year.

Whether or not to include Israeli narrators was one of the most difficult decisions we made in compiling this book. We have not sought to provide equal representation of Israeli and Palestinian voices in this collection, because our concern here is the experience of growing up and making a life under military occupation. However, we ultimately chose to include two Israeli citizens living in the West Bank: Amiad Cohen and Tali Shapiro. We share their stories partly because Israeli citizens living in the West Bank make up a substantial portion—perhaps as much as 10 percent—of the total population of Palestine. And because many of our narrators often refer to settlers throughout this book, we felt it journalistically responsible to include Amiad's narrative in order to offer our readers a look at life within a settlement, and to allow our readers to hear the opinions one settler has about living in the West Bank. We include Tali, a pro-Palestinian activist from Israel, in order to complicate our readers' thinking of how the occupation affects life in the West Bank. Still, our narrators only represent themselves, and our two Israeli citizens are not meant to stand in for the lives, attitudes, or opinions of other Israelis.

And of course, the story of Palestine is much more complicated than the story of Israelis and Palestinians. The relationship between Israel of Palestine is often oversimplified, treated as a bitter family feud that will end only when the two sides stop hating each other. But there are many more players helping to preserve the status quo. Since the early 1980s, Israel has received billions a year in military aid from the U.S. From 2009 through 2018, the U.S. is scheduled to send $3 billion a year for Israeli defense. With this book our hope is that the narratives within provide readers with a more nuanced and humanized understanding of life on the ground in Palestine, as well as inspiration to take a more active interest in peace—and the role of foreign influence—in the region.

Palestine is often portrayed as a dark place—violent and unstable, too complicated for anyone but an expert in political science to understand. To many it is the global poster child of intractable conflict, a symbol of hopelessness. We came to Palestine not knowing what we'd find. But over bread and salt, coffee and tea, we found ourselves drawn into the stories we heard. Stories that were important for our narrators to share, and that we're honored to share with our readers. These narratives show that while there is darkness in the occupied territories, there is also a tremendous amount of

light in the lives of the people living there. We hope this book serves to reflect some of that light back out into the world and offers our readers a new understanding of life under occupation.

Cate Malek and Mateo Hoke
July 2014

EXECUTIVE EDITOR'S NOTE

The narratives in this book are the result of extensive oral history interviews with more than seventy men and women from across the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem, conducted over the course of nearly four years. These recorded interviews—over 250 hours of audio—were conducted by Cate Malek and Mateo Hoke as well as a team of interviewers and translators, and then transcribed by a small corps of dedicated volunteers. Managing editor Luke Gerwe and I helped the interview team shape and organize those raw transcripts into first-person narratives.

With every Voice of Witness narrative, we aim for a novelistic level of detail and a birth-to-now chronologized scope in order to portray narrators as individuals in all their complexity, rather than as case studies. With *Palestine Speaks*, we did not set out to create a comprehensive history of human rights in Palestine. Rather, our goal was to compile a collection of voices and experiences that would offer an accessible, thought-provoking, and ultimately humanizing and intimate window on what can often seem like an impenetrable topic.

The stories themselves remain faithful to the speakers' words (we seek final narrator approval before publishing their narratives), and have been edited for clarity, coherence, and length. In a few cases, some names and details have been changed to protect the identities of our narrators and the identities of family and acquaintances. The narratives themselves have been carefully fact-checked, and are supported by various appendices and a glossary included in the back of the book that provide context and some explanation of the history of the region.

We thank all the men and women who generously and patiently shared their experiences with us, including those whom we were unable to include in this book. We also thank all the frontline human rights defenders working to promote and protect the rights and dignity of all men and women throughout Israel and Palestine. Without the cooperation of these human rights advocates, this book would not be possible.

Finally, we thank our community of educators and students who inspire our education program. With each Voice of Witness book, we create a common core–aligned curriculum that connects high school students and educators with the stories and issues presented in the book. Our education program also provides curriculum support, training, and site visits to educators in schools and invested communities.

Visit the Voice of Witness website for free lesson plans, additional interview material, and to find out how you can be part of our work: voiceofwitness.org.

mimi lok
Executive Director
& Executive Editor
Voice of Witness

MAP OF THE WEST BANK AND GAZA

ISRAELI MILITARY ROADBLOCK, WEST BANK

IBTISAM ILZGHAYYER

Director of cultural center, 54
Born in Battir, West Bank
Interviewed in Bethlehem, West Bank

During our dozen or more meetings with Ibtisam Ilzghayyer in her office, her black hair is either pulled back into a slick ponytail or falls to her shoulders in tight curls. She speaks with us in English, and she has a distinct accent influenced by her time studying at Newcastle University in northern England. When she stands, she adjusts a clamp on a knee brace in order to walk. This is due to a childhood bout with polio, which she contracted when she was two years old.

Ibtisam is the director of the Ghirass Cultural Center, which she helped found in 1994. Ghirass, which means "young trees" in Arabic, serves more than a thousand youth annually in the Bethlehem region through enrichment programs in reading, traditional Palestinian arts, and more. The center also provides literacy programs for women—generally mothers who are learning to read so that they can take a more active role in their children's education.

The walls of Ibtisam's office are decorated with awards and framed drawings by children who have passed through the center. Throughout her day, children stop by to share their successes—an improved test score or a list of books read during the month. Ibtisam takes time with each one to congratulate and encourage them, and to laugh with them. She spends most of her time at the center—she works five or six days a week, though she can often be found at the center on her days off as well. When she isn't at the

center, she is likely to be at home with her elderly mother, tending a large garden of fruit trees, flowers, and vegetables.

ALL MY LIFE I HAVE LIVED UNDER OCCUPATION

I was born in 1960, in Battir.[1] Life in the village was simple. Most of my neighbors were farmers, and when I was a child, people from Battir would all travel into Jerusalem to sell produce in the markets there. My parents had some land that they farmed, and my father was also a chef. When I was very young, he worked at a hotel in Amman, Jordan, and we'd see him on the weekends.[2] Then, after 1967, he began working as a chef at the American Colony Hotel in Jerusalem.[3]

My mother stayed home and raised me and my siblings—there were nine of us. We didn't have TVs, and there were no computers of course, and no plastic toys to keep us distracted. I think we were lucky to not have those things. Instead, we used nature. We'd play in the fields, climb trees, make toys ourselves out of sticks and stones. It seemed then like there weren't divisions then between neighbors, despite religion or other differences. We were all part of one culture in many ways. I remember my mother coloring eggs every Easter. It was something that had been passed down for generations—it wasn't a Christian thing or a Muslim thing, it was a Palestinian thing to mark Easter that way.

I must have joined in all the games when I was very young, but then I developed a disability as an infant. When I was two and a half years old, my mother was carrying me past a clinic in town one day. A clinic nurse stopped us and told my mother she should come in, that she should get me the vaccine for polio. So I was given a vaccine. That night I had a fever, and I couldn't move my right arm and left leg. Over the next few years, I was able to regain function of my limbs, but my left leg grew in shorter than my right. At age four, I started wearing a brace to help me walk. It was just bad luck that we walked past that clinic.

I had to get used to people treating me differently because of my disability. Even people's facial expressions when meeting me were different—they didn't react to me as if I were a normal child. When I was at school,

I was excluded from physical education activities, and some field trips that required a lot of walking. That was really difficult.

I also had learning disabilities. My teacher beat me once in fourth grade because I was nearly failing all subjects. Education was important to my parents, so they were unhappy that I was struggling. My father had only gone through fourth grade, so he could read and write. My mother had never been to school. But they wanted more for their kids. Especially me. Because I had a disability, they wanted me to do well in school so that I'd be independent when I grew up, and not need to rely on anyone.

Then in the fifth grade, I succeeded on an exam, and the feeling was very strange. The teacher handed back the paper and said the work was "excellent." I couldn't believe I'd done anything that would make her say that. I couldn't believe that it was *my* paper that was excellent. I thought she'd made a mistake. I think that's common for children who aren't used to success—they don't realize it's their effort that leads to excellence. They think it's by accident. But I tasted success just that one time, and I realized I loved it. I just had to convince myself it wasn't a mistake! Then I continued to try hard at school, and I started to realize my potential.

In 1977, I was accepted into a boarding school in Jerusalem. It was actually right next to the American Colony Hotel, so I could see my father sometimes. I'd also go home on holidays. It was still relatively easy to travel into and out of Jerusalem then.

I did well enough in high school that I got accepted into the University of Jordan in Amman.[4] I started there in the fall of 1979, and I studied economics. I loved university, and I wasn't lonely. Other than college students who became friends, I had a lot of family living and working in Amman. But I still felt homesick sometimes, and I started to understand what made Palestine feel special. In my last year at university, the Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish came to read at a theater on campus.[5] I got tickets to go, but when I arrived, the theater was absolutely packed. And the streets outside were full. There were so many Palestinians in Jordan, and we all wanted to hear this poet remind us what it meant to be Palestinian.

IT RAISED A LOT OF EMOTIONS FOR ME

I returned home in 1984, and I had one of the hardest years of my life. I had just spent many years working extremely hard to make something of myself, to become independent from my parents—economically, emotionally, socially—so that I wouldn't be a burden to them. Then I returned to Palestine and found I couldn't get a job. Because of my economics degree, I wanted to work in a bank, but there weren't any jobs in that field available, and I couldn't find any other sort of work. So I lived with my parents for a year and they supported me. I was very depressed during that time.

Then one day in 1985, I read a classified ad put up by the BASR.[6] They were offering to train workers in a field called community-based rehabilitation, which was about helping people with disabilities overcome them by working with the family—the whole community, really—to integrate the disabled into daily life. At first, I wanted nothing to do with that sort of work. I had an economics degree, and I had spent my whole life trying to get away from any limitations imposed by my own disability. I simply didn't want to think about disabilities. But I desperately wanted a job, so I applied.

I trained with the BASR for a year. It was hard. I worked with children who had hearing issues, blindness, mental health issues. The work brought up a lot of emotions for me, and it took some time to become comfortable around the children. But I kept receiving praise from my supervisors, and they made me feel like I was useful.

In 1986, I began working in some of the refugee camps in Bethlehem as well, and that helped open my eyes. I got to see some of the real trauma that was happening in the community. That same year, BASR opened a community center for people with mental health disabilities, and I helped to run it. It was a very busy time for me.

Then the following year, in 1987, the First Intifada began.[7] I remember it started just after I got my driver's license. I bought an old used car on November 30 of that year, and I was really proud of myself. I was starting to feel quite independent. Then I set out to drive to work for the first time on December 6, and I ended up driving through streets littered with stones and burning tires. It was the first day of the Intifada, and I couldn't make it

to work that day—there was too much happening in the streets. So I spent the day listening to the news with my family.

THINKERS BEFORE FIGHTERS

The idea of starting a community center came to me in 1990. It was the middle of the First Intifada, and the streets were dangerous places to play for children. Aside from the threat of getting caught in fighting, children were sometimes targeted by soldiers. Sometimes children threw stones at soldiers, but other times soldiers would find children simply playing traditional games with stones. Many children, even young children, were arrested by soldiers who saw them playing these games. So the idea of the center started as a way to give children a safe place to play.

Also, at that time many schools were frequently closed by military order, so children had to stay at home for long stretches of time. Sometimes the Israeli military would even use schools as checkpoints to control the area. The school in Battir was used as a military camp. These realities came together to make us want to start the center.

The BASR was able to establish the Ghirass Cultural Center in Bethlehem in late 1993, early 1994. In the West Bank at that time, the school curriculum was Jordanian. In Gaza, it was Egyptian.[8] So when I went to school, I studied a Jordanian curriculum. We never studied anything about Palestine or its history. We never saw a Palestinian map. We studied the history of Jordan, of China, of Germany, of England—I remember learning about all the families who ruled England—but nothing connected to our history, nothing connected to our geography, nothing connected to our culture.

When we started the center, we wanted to educate children about Palestinian culture, Palestinian music, Palestinian poetry. We have famous poets like Mahmoud Darwish, but it was forbidden for us to read from them or read other Palestinian writers. If the Israelis caught us with a book from certain Palestinian writers, we might end up in jail. We couldn’t have Palestinian flags, political symbols, anything considered propaganda for a Palestinian state—everything could get us into trouble. My family, like most in the West Bank, had a hiding spot at home. For us, it was at the back

of the cupboard. When we heard there were going to be raids on houses, we'd quickly hide our forbidden books of poetry or flags or whatever behind a false wall at the back of that cupboard.

With these restrictions in mind, one of our first goals at the center was to provide a sense of Palestinian culture to children. We wanted the center to be inclusive, so we didn't allow any religious symbols or symbols of any specific political parties in the center. We had children from Christian communities and Muslim, urban and rural, from refugee camps and from relatively well-off neighborhoods. I also continued to work with children who had disabilities, but we integrated them with other kids in the classroom, whether they were blind or hearing impaired or had learning disabilities. They were all integrated.

After working this way in the cultural center, I even began to forget my own disability completely. I had other things to worry about or work on. One day, I saw myself in a reflection in a window while in the street, and I remembered I didn't walk as other people do—I had simply forgotten for a time that I had any disability at all. And I was happy for myself! Overcoming my own disability was no longer my focus.

In the center, I tried to make students thinkers before fighters. I did everything I could to keep them in the center, or make sure they went straight home to keep them from dangerous interactions with the soldiers. We lost some children—some had a strong feeling that they wanted to fight. It was very difficult. Of course, they didn't always understand what they were doing. But they weren't just imitating other people who were fighting in the streets, they were expressing their own anger from experiencing humiliation and violence.

Not long after the center was established and I had begun working there, I had the chance to travel abroad for the first time. I went with a friend to help her apply for a scholarship offered by the British consul to study in England. While there, I applied myself, sort of on a whim. But it turns out I won the scholarship. When I got the call that I had won, the consular office gave me two weeks to get ready for travel. So for the first time, I got to leave Palestine—other than my college years in Jordan.

I studied for a year at Newcastle University and learned administration and counseling.[9] It was a good experience, even though it was hard. I felt

homesick from the moment the plane took off. I was away from home from the fall of 1994 to the spring of 1995. I got to travel a lot throughout England, and that was interesting, but I wanted to go home the whole time. I remember I had very little money, and what I had I'd use to call my family. I'd spend hours asking my brothers about neighbors I barely knew —old men who hung out on the street that I never talked to, for instance— just because I wanted to know everything that was happening at home. When I completed all my coursework, I was expected to stay for the graduation ceremony and some parties. But I told the school administration I didn't want any parties, I just wanted to go home and see my family!

CHILDREN SEE THAT THEIR PROTECTORS ARE SCARED

The Second Intifada began in 2000.[10] During that time, I had to get around a lot of crazy obstacles just to continue my work. From late 2000 to 2003, I used to practically live in this office because I couldn't always go back home. I remember the first time I tried to go home to Battir from Bethlehem in 2000, just after the Intifada started. It was just a couple of miles, and the checkpoint was closed. Nobody could cross to or from the five villages on the other side of the checkpoint. The soldiers refused to let anyone go back home. Children, old men, workers—imagine, all these normal people who wanted to go back home at four p.m., the end of the working day. Hundreds of people! We were surrounded by soldiers, and I remember thinking that nobody had any place to hide if shooting started. I waited that day from four p.m. to seven p.m. At seven p.m., I was so angry and depressed I started talking to myself. I said, "God, are you there? And if you are there, are you seeing us? And if you are seeing us, are you satisfied with what is happening to us?" Finally, a little after seven p.m., I gave up and came back to Bethlehem and stayed at the center.

Another time that same year, I tried to walk home past the checkpoint. The Israelis had blocked the road with large stones. I wanted to go around the stones, because I couldn't climb over them with my leg problems. It was also slippery, because it was wintertime. But a soldier, a man less than twenty-five years old, stopped me from going around. When I tried to explain, the soldier said bad things to me—nobody in my life has said these

things to me. He called me a prostitute. I can't repeat all the things he said. I became angry and I started to argue, and at that moment, a young man, Palestinian, tried to calm me down and asked me to stay quiet. He took my hand and helped me pass the checkpoint. At that moment I couldn't talk. I passed the checkpoint, and my brother was waiting for me on the other side. He took me by my hand and led me to his car, where my nephews and nieces were waiting. Normally I would talk to them, but I couldn't say a word. I knew that if I spoke, I'd start crying, and nobody would be able to stop me. I reached home and I threw myself on the bed. I felt I was paralyzed completely.

I saw the soldier the next day. I had a feeling that if I'd had a gun, I would have killed him. You know, I can't kill an insect, but in that moment, I felt my anger was more than it's been at any time. When he saw me, he began swearing at me again. It was very humiliating. I saw that soldier many times—usually soldiers would stay one week or ten days before they changed the group of soldiers at the checkpoints. I had to see him every day. And every day I looked at him and wished that someone would kill him in front of me. I wanted him to suffer.

One more occasion stands out from that checkpoint during the Second Intifada—I'm not sure exactly when. I remember a little girl was crying. She needed to get to school to take exams, and the soldier wouldn't let her. It's not guaranteed that a child is able to go to school. And it's not guaranteed that the child will be able to come back. Of course, this kind of helplessness has a psychological impact on kids as they grow up. Many parents have told us that their children have nightmares and achievement problems. Children look to us adults as people who can protect them, and when we can't—in many situations, we're scared! To see the child recognize that his mother is scared, his father is scared—it's not an easy thing.

When you move around Bethlehem, it's very restricted. We don't travel long distances. When you face a checkpoint or a wall, you might need to travel only a mile or two as the crow flies, but your destination is far away behind the wall. The children I teach don't have a good sense of distance because of the restrictions. They might say they live "far away," and I'll ask, "How far?" And it's a ten-minute car ride away, if not for checkpoints.

That's far for them, because that fifteen minutes might actually be an hour or two most days.

Sometimes I try to put all the obstacles in the back of my mind—the checkpoints, the harassments—to try and keep up my energy for my work, to keep my optimism for the future. But when I'm waiting at checkpoints, I have to face the hard realities of our lives. And the children I deal with—they also have to face these realities, and before they're even fully grown they have to face them without guidance, without someone to protect them.

THE SIGN JUST SAID "OTHERS"

Back in 1994, just after we'd started the center, we used to take students to Jerusalem for trips, to spend the day in the city. It was possible then. Since the Second Intifada, it's not possible to take the class to Jerusalem.

I think this is the first generation of Palestinians that isn't able to see Jerusalem easily. Now we only talk about Jerusalem. At the center, when we ask the children, "What is Jerusalem?" they only know about the Dome of the Rock.[11] That's all Jerusalem is for them. They've never experienced the city—to see it with true senses, to feel it, to smell it. They only know it through photos. I think it's really demoralizing that this experience, something that used to be essential to being Palestinian, has vanished. I think the Israeli government wants other parts of Palestine—Gaza, Jerusalem— banished from our minds. The new generation, these children might never come to Jerusalem. After years, how will it be in their mind? They won't think of it as Palestine.

Here in the center, we try to keep students connected with the different parts of Palestine, even if it's only through photos, movies, films—anything. For instance, I want our students to understand that Gaza is part of Palestine. This is my hope for all Palestinians in the West Bank, that if they have the opportunity, even if it takes a lot of effort, to go and visit Gaza. I think it's our duty. Many people have lost their lives to keep Gaza and the West Bank one land. I'm not losing my life, but I have put in some real effort to go there.

In 2011, I went to Gaza to facilitate an outreach program. I was with a German colleague who worked for a German NGO that addressed

international development projects. The German NGO was trying to fund a cultural center in Gaza that used our center in Bethlehem as a model.

The Israelis keep a tight control on who gets into Gaza, so the permits to visit were not easy to get. I had to go through a lawyer and the court to get the permit. First, the Israeli military rejected my request for the permit, but I was able to appeal and get permission from the court to go for one night. It took me some time to get permission. But even then, I had to go through checkpoints—a checkpoint to get out of the West Bank, and then another checkpoint to get into Gaza.

To get to Gaza, we took the car of my German colleague. When Palestinian workers in Israel talk about the checkpoint, you can't imagine—you hear about it, but you need to live the experience to understand it. We went through the checkpoint nearest Hebron, because from Bethlehem it is the most direct route to Gaza.[12] It was the first time I was at that checkpoint. I can't imagine the mind that designed that checkpoint. It's a kind of torture. We tried to pass through the checkpoint in her car. We thought we might have an easier time in her car since she was an international. She passed right through in her car at first, but then a soldier stepped into the road and stopped us. They checked my ID, saw that I was Palestinian, and I was made to get out of the car and walk back to the checkpoint building—a fifteen-minute walk! It was difficult for me to walk all that way with my brace. When I got back to the checkpoint, I was put in line with the rest of the Palestinians. It was around seven a.m., so most of the people there were workers. We were herded in lines through cages, and all around us were young soldiers with guns. There were only three or four other women in line, and they all passed through with no extra delay. But not me.

All the Palestinians have to pass through metal detectors. I failed the detector because of my metal leg brace. The soldiers had to examine me personally because I couldn't just take off the metal and pass through the detector. Soldiers behind security glass told me that I'd need to be taken to a special cell. The whole time I was at the checkpoint, I hardly ever talked to a soldier directly—it was through microphones, since they were always behind glass.

I was taken to a cell with no chairs. The walls were all metal with no windows, and I couldn't see anyone. I stood waiting for half an hour. I thought they might have forgotten about me. Because of my disability, it's difficult for me to stand for long periods of time. I knocked, and nobody came. Later, I knocked several more times, to remind them that there was somebody here.

Then I was taken to another room, also like a cell—just five feet by five feet. Here there was a soldier behind security glass. She was young, in her twenties. Otherwise I was alone in the room. The soldier was dealing with me as if I didn't exist. She ignored me and didn't bother to explain what would happen next. She just sat there behind the glass. From time to time I would knock, or ask her to please search me so I could leave the cell, and she'd say, "I'm just waiting for someone to come." For an hour she left me standing there.

Then another soldier joined her behind the glass. They told me to undress. I said, "I can't, there's a camera." She looked at it and said flatly, "Yes, there's a camera in the room." Every checkpoint has a Palestinian mediator, someone to translate and do chores for the soldiers, and I made them get him for me. This took a long time. Eventually, he arrived and I talked to him. He put his jacket on the camera and then brought me something to put on. I got undressed and then the soldiers told me how to move so they could examine me. Then I put on the clothes the mediator brought while he took my other clothes for them to examine. More waiting. After everything was over, the mediator took his jacket and left, and then I was taken to pass through the metal detector again.

The whole time, my colleague was outside in the car waiting for me. It had been hours. Then, once we made it to the Gaza border, it was the same procedure. My German colleague was allowed to pass quickly through the checkpoint, while I had to go through procedures strictly for Palestinians, not for foreigners. At the Erez checkpoint, we were not in the car.[13] We had to park, and after you pass through the checkpoint, everyone has to walk through a mile-long tunnel to where the taxis are.

The tunnel was an open-air tunnel, with fencing on both sides. It was narrow—not big enough for a car to drive through. Outside the fence was a barren, treeless security area. My colleague had waited for me so we could

walk the tunnel together, but a mile is very far for me to walk. I had to sit on a luggage cart of another Palestinian who pushed me the whole way. It was a struggle for me. I like to think of myself as strong, independent. I do things on my own. It's not easy for me to sit on a luggage cart and be pushed!

We finally made it to Gaza after hours going through the checkpoints. We went directly to the organization because we couldn't waste time. They only issued me a permit for one day! It's ridiculous to not be able to visit your own country. We can move freely in other countries, but not in our own.

After I finished my trip to Gaza, I had to go back through screening at Erez. This time, at the start of the checkpoint, I saw the two signs—one for "Israelis and Foreigners," and the other just said, "Others." You know, it's like they want us to feel that we belong to nothing. They could write "Palestinians," they could write "Arabs," but "Others"?

Going through the tunnel, there were open-air cells along the way. They were more modern than the Hebron checkpoint, but the same principle. The soldiers were all on high scaffolding with guns. They looked down on us from up high and talked into microphones. They would say things like, "Open gate number 2. Open gate number 10." And they'd tell us to move along. The whole time, we could see soldiers on the scaffolding, but we could never see exactly who was talking to us and ordering us onward to the next cell.

The last cell had a ceiling and a grated floor. A soldier behind the glass was there. She asked me to take off my clothes. We negotiated what I could take off and leave on. I took off my trousers and my brace and put them on the conveyor belt. She checked them and then put my things back on the machine to send back to me. I waited for them to contact the people who got me a permit. It took a long time. I thought I had already negotiated all the permits I needed, so it would be fine, but no. They made me wait anyway.

I've spoken with some friends and some people at the Bethlehem Arab Society for Rehabilitation. They go through the same thing, the same conditions. They have the same procedure. It's not because of me—they target Palestinians anyway—but they could show more understanding. They could not make me wait so long, or bring me a chair to sit on, to be humane.

I understand they need to check, but they could do it without humiliating the person. If this were just about security, they wouldn't need to humiliate Palestinians and not others. It's to show that we're a lower class of people. The Israelis and foreigners are first-class, the Palestinian people fifth-class. And people don't understand why we are fighting. I want to be equal! Equality! Not one of us is better than the other.

Someday I want to go back to Gaza to keep working on developing a cultural center that is like Ghirass. But by then I hope I can find an easier way to get there than through the Hebron and Erez checkpoints as they are now. Still, I'm happy that I passed that experience, really. Now I know what it's like for Palestinians who have had to travel through the checkpoints day after day for work.

ALL THINGS INDICATE THAT THE FUTURE WILL BE MORE DIFFICULT

I am very proud of being Palestinian. I have never thought of living in another country. I've traveled across Europe, but I prefer to live in Palestine. When I was abroad and something bad happened in Palestine, it would be very difficult for me to sleep. If people I love die, then I want to die with them; if they live, I want to live with them. If they face a difficult situation, I want the same thing to happen to me. I want to be a member of this society. When I think of Palestine, I think of the struggles we've had. We have to keep struggling for our rights, and there's no end to the struggling for me—some days it's for rights, some days it's to improve education. We are all fighters. When I do work with the children at the center, that's fighting. When I work to improve their quality of life, that's fighting. And working against the occupation, that's fighting as well.

Day by day, it becomes more difficult. All things happening in Palestine indicate that the future will be more difficult. Twelve years ago we did not have the wall, the settlements were fewer, the harassment was less. Everything bad is increasing. Usually I avoid going to the checkpoints, because it makes me sick—physically, emotionally, all kinds of sick. It usually takes me time to come back to normal.

My goal now is to expand the center—to extend it and spread it to other places. We're working on outreach programs, to reach schools and other communities that are struggling just to continue to exist. Some villages are surrounded by Israeli settlements and are cut off from important resources. We are looking to support these communities and improve the quality life through education. I believe a lot in education if you want to rebuild the nation.

At the cultural center, we try to keep our students as children as long as possible, to protect them. When they reach a certain age, we can't protect them anymore, they have to face the reality of the streets by themselves. And this is very sad. I can think of many times I've been out walking with my nephew, or with other young boys and girls who are nearing the end of childhood. Suddenly I would get very sad, because when they reach fourteen, fifteen years old, they are children under international and national law, but the soldiers don't think of them as children. They deal with them as adults. And it doesn't matter if they're following the law or not. How they're treated depends on soldiers' moods.

I use many strategies to manage. My strategy is that I love life. I want to protect my life, and the lives of others, as much as I can. Life, even with all these difficulties, deserves to be lived. And I like to look for nice things. Even the smile of a child, or flowers—I try to find something.

I'm not optimistic about the future for Palestinians. Israel is strong, and the Western powers give them their support. On the other hand, I don't think Israel can continue this forever. The world will not support Israel forever with all their behavior towards Palestinians. One day, changes will happen—history proves this. One day, sooner or later, the Palestinians will have their rights.

When the world looks at Palestine I do not think they see the full situation. If people want to see the reality of the situation, they will see. If they want to hear the reality, they will hear. But if they don't want to know the reality of the situation, they won't, even if it's right there in front of them.

[1] Battir is a village of around 4,000 people located four miles west of Bethlehem and three miles southwest of Jerusalem. It is a site of ancient agricultural terraces and was named a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2014.

[2] Amman, the capital of Jordan, is a city of over 2 million residents. Jordan administered the West Bank between 1948 and 1967, and many Palestinians worked in Amman during this time. For more information on the history of the West Bank and Jordan, see Appendix I, page 295.

[3] The American Colony Hotel is a luxury hotel in Jerusalem. It was built in the 1950s on the site of a former utopian Christian community started by an American couple from Chicago in 1881. The hotel is well known as a gathering spot for influential people from diverse political and religious backgrounds.

[4] The University of Jordan is considered one of the most prestigious universities in the Arab world. It was founded in 1962 and currently serves over 30,000 undergraduates.

[5] Mahmoud Darwish (1941–2008) was considered Palestine's leading poet and helped lead a movement to promote Palestinian cultural heritage. Darwish was also a political leader of the Palestinian liberation movement and part of the executive committee of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) from 1973 to 1993. For more information on the PLO, see the Glossary, page 304.

[6] The Bethlehem Arab Society for Rehabilitation (BASR) was originally founded in 1960 as part of the Leonard Cheshire Disability project, a major charitable organization in Great Britain dedicated to global disability care.

[7] The First Intifada was an uprising throughout the West Bank and Gaza against Israeli military occupation. It began in December 1987 and lasted until 1993. *Intifada* in Arabic means "to shake off." For more information, see Appendix I, page 295.

[8] Jordan administered the West Bank and Egypt partially administered Gaza until 1967. Textbooks developed during those administrations were used even during the Israeli occupation after 1967, but when the Palestinian Authority assumed administrative control of the West Bank in Gaza after the Oslo Accords, it developed its own educational texts. For more information on the Oslo Accords and the Palestinian Authority, see the Glossary, page 304.

[9] Newcastle University is a public research university in northeast England. It serves over 20,000 students.

[10] The Second Intifada was also known as the Al-Aqsa Intifada. It was the first major conflict between Israel and Palestine following the Oslo accords, and it lasted from 2000 to 2005. For more information on the Intifadas, see Appendix I, page 295.

[11] The Dome of the Rock is an Islamic shrine built on the site of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. For more information on the Dome of the Rock and the Temple Mount, see the Glossary, page 304.

[12] For more on checkpoints and border crossings, see the Glossary, page 304.

[13] As of 2014, the Erez crossing is the only remaining crossing point between Israel and the Gaza Strip accessible to Palestinians. The crossing is tightly restricted since 2007, and special case-by-case

permits granted by Israel are needed. For more on checkpoints, see the Glossary, page 304.

ABEER AYYOUB IN WEST JERUSALEM

ABEER AYYOUB

Journalist, 26
Born in Gaza City, Gaza
Interviewed in Gaza City, Gaza

In the spring of 2013, we manage to travel to Gaza after navigating a maze of bureaucracy with both the Egyptian government and Gaza's ruling party, Hamas. Inside the tightly sealed borders of Gaza, our guide and translator is a young journalist named Abeer Ayyoub. Through our conversations, we soon realize Abeer possesses an interesting perspective on life in Gaza. And though journalists generally avoid interviewing other journalists for stories, the more we get to know Abeer, the more we know her narrative is a valuable one to share with our readers.

During our time with Abeer, she is constantly on her phone or tablet. Like many full-time journalists, she compulsively checks her e-mail, keeps track of social media, and plans meetings throughout the day. But her real weakness is Instagram. If she's not using her devices for work, she's taking pictures of what she's doing. Sitting at a café: picture. Walking down the street: picture. At the corner store: picture. Nothing is too banal to make her Instagram feed, but it makes for a thorough view of life for a young working woman in Gaza.

As part of Gaza's small middle class, Abeer has better access than other Gazans to resources that are hard to come by in the midst of the blockade that Israel has implemented since 2007. She also has access to small comforts that make her the envy of her peers. "My friend from the American consulate was going to Jordan, and he asked me if I wanted him to bring me back anything," she tells us. "And I said, 'As many lip glosses as you can

carry.' I'm usually out on the streets looking for stories for ten hours a day, and I need three things in my bag—a notebook, a pen, and lip gloss."

GAZA WAS LIKE A HOLLYWOOD MOVIE

Oh, well, of course it was just *lovely* growing up in Gaza. It was like a Hollywood movie. But not a romance or comedy—more like an action movie. I've witnessed two Intifadas, two military offensives, one Hamas coup.[1] Still, the more trouble I've witnessed, the more I've felt lucky to survive, and to be alive.

I was born in Gaza City the year the First Intifada started, in 1987.[2] By the time I started school, I'd already become used to the sight of Israeli soldiers patrolling the streets every morning. I used to be really scared of them—my grandma would warn me that I shouldn't talk to them. In school, we'd teach each other tips about dealing with the soldiers. For example—when you see an Israeli jeep, don't run, 'cause the soldiers will think you're doing something bad. But we were naïve as children, and I didn't think too much about who the soldiers were or why they were around. I only knew there were strange people with green uniforms everywhere. And I wondered, *All of the soldiers have guns, but nobody else I see ever does. Who do they need to protect themselves against with guns if everyone else only has rocks as weapons?* But I didn't understand the occupation at all. It just wasn't something my family talked about when I was growing up.

I grew up feeling like a typical Gazan. I have four brothers and five sisters. I'm number eight out of ten kids. My dad had a good income when I was young—he ran a metalworking business. But because there were ten children, it cost him a lot to send us all to school. So even though my family was relatively well off, my childhood seemed typical. I got the things I needed, but not all the things I wanted. We'd get new clothes for school, but not whatever we asked for or anything like that. Like most people in the community, we'd go to shop when the school year started, and then shop around Eid Al-Fitr, the feast after Ramadan, and then Eid Al-Adha.[3]

We lived on a street that was made up entirely of my family. My dad had one house for his family, and he had four brothers with their own

houses on the block. So between my siblings and my cousins, I spent my whole childhood playing with family. As boys and girls, we'd play soccer together in the street, go to school together, then come home together. We had a few neighbor kids nearby who would come play with us as well.

My mother was a normal housewife in many ways. She worked very hard and tried to give all of us kids the attention we wanted. I remember when it was time to do homework, she'd try to help us all. Of course, she couldn't spend much time with any one of us! I still remember her teaching me how to write my first words, though, in Arabic and in English. She didn't know English herself, but she'd memorize my English lessons and try to help me understand them. I remember her reciting the days of the week in English, so that I'd learn, even if that's all she knew.

The Second Intifada started in 2000, when I was twelve or thirteen. I saw a lot of shooting and violence—there were direct clashes around the Israeli settlements.[4] And I used to go to school some days and not other days because of what was happening out in the streets. Other young people from schools around the area, they used to come and get us out to go and participate in the clashes. It was violent all the time. Mostly, we just tried to stay safe. A lot of days, we'd leave school early because there were often clashes at the end of the school day. If we slipped out before the day ended, we might not have to walk home through teargas.

During the time of the Second Intifada, I was a teenager, and back then I was the stereotypical stupid girl who wanted to get married at the age of sixteen. I'd never dream of having male friends I might just hang out with alone.

The separation of boys and girls was actually something that surprised me at first, but I got used to it quickly. Some of the neighbor boys I used to play soccer with every day suddenly stopped talking to me around the time I turned fifteen, and my brothers and cousins told me I should just pretend I didn't know them. This was the culture—these boys I'd played with for ten years every day were suddenly strangers to me, since they weren't related and I was a young woman. It was disappointing, but I got used to believing that wearing a hijab was something important, that I had to hide myself from men.[5]

My dad always told me that I was the most clever of his children, and I got great grades. But I never had any examples of women who went on to have impressive careers, and nobody ever encouraged me to think in those terms. But I studied very hard. Honestly, I didn't think I was very pretty, and I thought I'd have a hard time finding a husband. I thought I'd prove I was special instead by getting good grades and a very high grade on the college qualifying exams. And I did. My parents were so impressed by my score, they told me that they'd support me in going to any school and in any field I chose. I was studying for the exams in 2005, and that was a big year in Gaza as well. It was the year Israeli soldiers left Gaza. That felt like a real achievement.[6]

The next year, I started at Islamic University of Gaza here in Gaza City.[7] I wasn't happy about religious control of the university, but it had a curriculum in English literature that I wanted to study, and it was impossible to attend a university at the time that wasn't under Islamist control if you lived in Gaza. I'd been studying English through school, and I wanted to keep that up. I thought it might be a good way to get a job doing something important after school.

So I spent my first year at university studying English literature. Then, in 2006, Hamas captured Gilad Shalit, and Gaza became a different place.[8] Israel began cracking down, and we had less money and less freedom. Because we didn't have as much money coming into our household, my dad wanted to pull us out of school. My mom is fond of gold and accessories, but she got all of her jewelry together and sold it all to pay for our college fees. So she's the reason I could continue my education. In many ways, it was my mom who made me what I am today.

I WOULD WAKE UP AND SCREAM, "I JUST NEED TO SLEEP!"

In my second year at university, I took a course where the teacher asked us to do a research project on people working with English-language skills. I hit on the topic of news editing. I don't remember the reason. I just wanted something to write about so I could hand in a paper. But when I started

searching, I found so many books on the subject, and they were really interesting.

Then as part of the project I interviewed a journalist here in Gaza—his name was Saud Abu Ramadan. He was a freelancer, and he wrote for newspapers all over the world. Our interview was really lovely, and he told me he'd be happy to mentor me as a journalist if I wanted. I accepted. Here in the media world, there are so many creeps who expect something from a girl. I've met so many men who will be like, "I'll teach you about journalism, but you have to do something for me." Bad stuff. But Saud wasn't like that, and through his office I also met a journalist named Fares Akram, who was a journalist and also a research consultant for Human Rights Watch.[9] They were both professional, and I learned a lot working with them. I started training with them once a week until I figured out it was exactly what I wanted to do. I wanted to be a journalist.

I was still a student when Israel sent soldiers into Gaza in 2008.[10] Because of the bombing, I was shut in at home for twenty-two days with my extended family. There were more than thirty of us in a single apartment, and we'd have breakfast, lunch, and dinner together—being together made us all feel a little safer. There was no electricity at all during that time. It was very cold, and we spent many hours huddled up under blankets. We cooked our food on an open fire and we had a little tank of propane gas to cook with as well, but we were trying to conserve the gas as long as possible. Nobody was selling things out in the open in Gaza during that time. During the days, some of my brothers would sneak out and head to secret black markets they knew about for some basic supplies. I spent most days listening to news on a battery-powered radio. I was trying to understand the situation as a journalist. *What is really happening? What's the real story? How are journalists trying to cover these stories?* As scared as I was, I felt like that time was a kind of training for me.

There were air strikes day and night. We were all especially scared at night, when we were trying to sleep. I remember falling asleep for a couple of minutes, then hearing the bombs start to fall. I would wake up and scream, "I just need to sleep!" By the final days of the campaign, we were all crying because we wanted to sleep so badly.

We learned to distinguish two types of noise—the *zzzz* of drones passing overhead, and the *whoosh* of F-16s coming in for air strikes. The sound of drones was annoying, but hearing the *whoosh* of F-16s was frightening, because it meant bombing was about to start. My nephews, who were just infants at the time, they learned to tell drones apart from planes. Nowadays, they don't even wake up for drones. We were never hit, though we did have windows broken on our building from nearby strikes. The windows on an apartment above ours came down. Nobody was injured, but I still remember the sound of the bomb falling—*schhhhh*.

I became paranoid after so many days of bombing. I used to think, *My house will never be targeted because we have no one engaged in military work*. But it could be for any reason—a militant passing by in a car. Maybe someone in one of the empty fields by our building—the bombers used to target empty fields because militants might use them for launching rockets.

Then, after three weeks, there was a cease-fire. I went back to the university the day after the cease-fire, even though it was still dangerous. When I saw the campus, I cried. It had been demolished. In many ways I hated that school—I didn't like the strict religious element—but the devastation made me cry. The school made many repairs over the next month, just fixing broken windows and making sure standing buildings were safe enough. And then all of us students went back to classes, even in buildings where the roofs were still broken. I was in school another year before I graduated, in 2010.

For the next year I worked as a fixer—someone who helped journalists make contacts in Gaza, set up interviews, that sort of thing. I was actively learning about journalism, meeting a lot of journalists. It was a good apprenticeship.

I WAS NAÏVE AND ANSWERED ALL THE QUESTIONS THEY WERE ASKING

I had my first big exposure to how the media world works in Gaza in January 2011. I was going to take part in a solidarity gathering with the Egyptian revolution.[11] I was also going to meet one of my mentors, Fares Akram, who was going to cover the story. There were about twenty-six of

us at the demonstration. But really, as soon as everyone showed up, the Hamas police force was already there preparing to shut it down. I think Hamas was afraid of protest movements in the Middle East spreading to Gaza and challenging their authority.

Just as I arrived at the scene, I got a call from Fares, who told me the demonstration was off, and he told me where to go to find his car so he could give me a ride home. I went and got into his car, and then a Hamas policeman walked up and said, “Your identity cards, please.” Fares gave his identity card to them.

But while this was happening, some female police officers were attacking some of the female protesters. One of the protesters wasn’t wearing a head scarf, and the female officer pulled her by the hair, slapped her, asked her why she wasn’t a real Muslim. I was worried I might get in trouble—Hamas would check to see if men and women riding in cars together were married or related, and if not, there could be an arrest. The officer at our car was distracted, and so I just stepped out of the car and started walking. After a couple of minutes, I found the policeman following me on his motorcycle. And when I turned around and made eye contact, he pulled up and said, “Your cell phone and your identity card.” I started crying like an idiot and gave him the phone and my ID. Then he said, “You can come and retrieve them from the police station.” I followed him to the station. And when I entered, I found four other women from the demonstration. They were acting strong and tough, but I was crying. My family didn’t know where I was, and the police refused to give me a phone call. Then they began interrogating me, and I was naïve and answered all the questions they were asking.

I was interrogated by a female officer, and she kept asking me about Fares and what I was doing with him. I was like, “I don’t know him. We just met. He’s a journalist, but I don’t know where he lives.” The interrogator said, “He’s the brother of so-and-so, we know.” And I was like, “Eh, no, he’s not.” She was trying to outsmart me.

Then the officer started going through my bag, asking me what was in it. She found a prescription drug I was taking for an injured leg, and she wanted to know about that. Then finally she said, “Okay, call your family members to come.” And that was the worst moment, because I thought, *What should I tell my mom and dad?* I called my brother—he has good

relations with people from Hamas. And then I signed a paper saying I wouldn't participate in such events later.

I went back home to find the story all over the news in Gaza. Everyone was talking about it, because it was the first time that Hamas had arrested women for protesting. It was a big story to see women arrested for activism. They had my full name on the news. I felt like I had made it big!

Then the rumors started. The media had its own spin. Suddenly commentators on the news were like, "Maybe it wasn't a protest, maybe these girls were just immoral and showing off, not even covering their hair," and stuff like that. I cried for a couple of days, because it was a little overwhelming, the whole exposure.

The experience of getting arrested, and then the media spin that maybe we were just prostitutes or something, it was crazy, and I decided to write about it all on a personal blog. So I wrote about this online and then someone from Hamas's Ministry of Information e-mailed me and said, "It's insane what you wrote. It's biased." This guy with the ministry said he would go to the website and start leaving comments if I didn't take down the post—*Abeer's not a professional journalist, you shouldn't hire her*, and stuff like that. It was my first run-in with Hamas over my writing. It was a little intimidating, but since then I've learned better how to deal with the government.

MY ONLY FEAR WAS ABOUT MAKING DEADLINES

I chose journalism as a career, which is not a very acceptable job for a girl here in Gaza. After I started working, some of my own relatives started to say bad things about me—my uncles and cousins would talk. And they were always pushing on my parents, like, "This is not the way Abeer should be, and everyone's going to talk about her, that she goes around talking with guys alone." Some of my cousins, they'd say things like, "This is the bitch who goes with guys all the way." My parents could have reached a point where they'd say, "Enough. Just stay at home and don't do anything because everyone is talking about you, and we know you are not doing something bad, but it's our reputation at the end of the day." But my family didn't have that reaction. No.

Slowly, my parents began to trust me with travel, with my work. I was getting assignments for web stories for outlets like the *Egyptian Independent*. Basically, eyes-on-the-ground sorts of stories about what was happening in Gaza. At first, I might get an assignment that would mean I'd have to travel to Rafah crossing, and my parents would be like, "Make sure you have a driver. We're worried."[12] And they didn't want me to leave Gaza City. But the more they saw that I could take care of myself, that nothing happened, the more they trusted me.

I also got some work as a researcher and fixer for Human Rights Watch. For my work with HRW, I got a chance to get out of Gaza and go to Jerusalem for the first time in early 2012. I got a pass from Israel to be in Jerusalem for eight days. When I went to Jerusalem, I was sure it was a dream. So I kept waiting for the moment I would wake up and find myself in bed. And then an hour passed, two hours, three hours, four hours, and I was slapping my cheek, like I should wake up. Then when the night came, and I slept, and then woke up again and I opened the window and it was Jerusalem—I was sure it wasn't a dream. I went to East Jerusalem, and I was seeing other parts of my homeland for the first time.

I had a friend from HRW in Jerusalem, and she took me for a ride. She wouldn't tell me where we were going, but we kept driving up and up. Suddenly, out my window I saw the Dome of the Rock.[13] I started screaming like an idiot. This was an image that I saw on posters or framed pictures in every house in Gaza when I was growing up, on all my school notebooks. And here it was, right in front of me.

But being in Jerusalem was a strange experience. One amazing thing was that other Palestinians in Jerusalem were seeing a Gazan for the first time. I remember going into a hotel in East Jerusalem. I wanted to tell everyone I met I was from Gaza, and I talked to the receptionist at the hotel—a Palestinian man. He was shocked. Then he made a dumb joke and asked me if I had any bombs in my pockets or something like that. Then the next day I got to take a bus ride to Ramallah, and I made small talk with a man on the bus who was from Bethlehem. When I told him I was from Gaza, he was as surprised as the receptionist. He said something like, "No way you're from Gaza, you're cute and smart!" The trip out of Gaza was really eye-opening for me.

IT WAS GOOD THAT I STAYED HOME

In 2012, I got a scholarship to go to Sweden for six months. My father wasn't ready for me to travel that far yet. He was worried. So he wouldn't let me go, and I cried for days. But it was good that I stayed home, because it led to one of my first big breaks.

During the first Israeli strike on Gaza, I was still doing my training, so I was reading news all the time. But in the second strike, in November 2012, I was already a professional journalist, so it was a bit different.[14] By this time I was only focusing on how to get news. My only fears were about making deadlines.

I used to go out into the street immediately after the air strike happened. I got used to seeing bodies: corpses lifted out from under the rubble. I would go into the hospital as well.[15] In the hospital, I was always watching the entrance. And cars would speed in so fast after a strike. Everyone outside would scream to back up, to give the arriving passengers more space. And I'd stay in my spot, watching women, and then men, and then children, and then old women—people of all ages and all different backgrounds—come in with all sorts of injuries from the air strikes.

And during the strikes I would be outside my home most of the day, and I even slept outside my home. The strike lasted eight days, and then afterward, I thought, *I was under the rockets and I didn't even cry*. It was the most important phase in my life, because I wrote for the biggest newspapers in the world, and I used to have my voice on international radio. I was turning in reporting for the *Guardian* in the UK and *Al Jazeera*. *Ha'aretz* in Israel hired me, because they weren't legally permitted to send journalists to Gaza to cover the strikes. I thought, *This is my real start*.

And after, I felt like I had all of these experiences to deal with, all of these feelings, but I didn't have time to even think about what I'd seen. It was insane. I felt like I needed a break just to process what happened, but there was no time. I got a lot of new opportunities to cover stories about the aftermath of the strikes, and there was just no chance to get away. I wanted to do something for the Palestinian cause itself, and I wanted to be a journalist, and I knew Gaza was the best place for me to be a journalist. But it was hard to keep working here without a break.

HEY, IT'S NOT ROCKETS ALL OVER GAZA

I'm studying again at the Islamic University of Gaza, where I got my B.A. in English Literature. I'm studying Hebrew because I want to learn a third language besides Arabic and English. There's nothing much I hope to do with Hebrew. I just want to speak the language and listen to Israeli news and Hebrew news, because some of what comes out of Israel is better news, when it comes to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Honestly, you're more likely to hear the truth from a few of the good Israeli sources than from Hamas sources. After my work for *Ha'aretz*, Hamas announced that Gazan journalists would no longer be allowed to work for Israeli media. I contacted them to ask why, and they told me I better just go along with the ban without complaining. I said, "I would understand if you stopped Israeli or American journalists who are totally pro-Israeli. I would understand if you banned *them* from working here. But I don't understand when you ban *me*, as a Palestinian who works for Israeli media—which I actually consider a kind of resistance." It was my pleasure just to sit down with a laptop and just write things to the Israeli audience. It was a kind of resistance, addressing the Israeli community and being credible at the same time. I would say exactly what's going on and convince the Israelis of how misled they are about Gaza by most of Israeli media.

But people around the world have the wrong idea about Gaza, not just Israelis. My mission in life is to destroy the stereotypical image about Palestinians in the media, so I keep taking photos of things that people don't think exist in Gaza. This is what I do in my news, and my reports, and my feature stories. In my Facebook and in my Instagram. So when I take photos, I try to take photos of girls without hijab, or young girls wearing shorts and stuff like that. And the beach. Hundreds, thousands, going to the beach just to swim, thinking of nothing. No fucking occupation, no fucking Hamas, nothing! They just want to have fun. I go to the market, take photos of mannequins with short dresses. And it's something normal to see a young girl with hijab, but I would try to avoid catching photos of her, because Western people in Europe and America, they already know about these people, and they are not my concern. I would rather focus on the type of people Western media never heard about. I also take photos all the time of

fancy hotels and fancy restaurants—like hey, it's not rockets all over Gaza. We have cafés, restaurants, clubs, gyms, whatever you can think of. So this is my main mission.

I would love everyone—not only in the U.S.—to know that Gaza is not Afghanistan. We have educated people and people who have nothing to do with the ongoing clashes. They should give themselves the chance to see the picture from outside and stop having this preconception when it comes to Gaza, because we have everything here, and the Western media always intend to prove the preconceptions people have. They would see that for most of the people, they are harmed by what's going on rather than being a part of it.

The thing is that I'm an Arabic-speaking journalist who writes in English, not my mother tongue. If I write in my mother tongue, then I will be addressing Palestinians themselves. And why would I address Palestinians themselves? Palestinians know that they were occupied, and they know their rights, they know their duties, they know everything. I'm writing in a second language, so I need to use that, because few international writers come regularly to Gaza. Usually, these people come with a preconception, the preconception of what they hear. And they come to prove what they have in mind, not to rectify it.

Still, being a Gazan journalist is not always easy. Every time I write something sensitive, I keep my phone with me because I'm waiting for someone to call me from the government offices in Gaza. I'm strong enough to face it. Every time I write something sensitive, I read the story ten times because I attribute every controversial quote to someone who actually said it, not anonymous sources, so I won't be accused of making it up. So even though I like to cover daily life in some of my work, I also want to uncover what's really happening in Gaza. I don't think you are doing anything unless you are risking something. I'm not going to consider myself a real journalist if I'm just covering the openings of new shopping malls in Gaza City.

With time, my relationship with the government has become fine. I have good relations with the government members and ministers and everything. I think they decided, *Sure, that Abeer is a journalist who talks a lot, but she never makes up stories.* It's true that I write about the government, but it's true also that I write about the Israeli occupation. There is a big difference if

you are focusing only on Hamas or on Israel or the Palestinian Authority. I write everything. But it's not my fault if the Hamas government commits five human rights violations in a row and I write about the five violations.

I DO STUFF THAT GIRLS HERE DON'T USUALLY DO

To help cope, I try to live a non-traditional Gaza life as much as that's possible. I wake up in the morning, go to the gym, hang out with friends, spend the night out. Now I'm applying for a swimming class. I do stuff that the girls here don't usually do. I'm learning a third language, just because I want to stay as busy as possible. Also because I don't want to feel the occupation is limiting things I can do. I'm busy 24/7, but that doesn't mean that I'm working 24/7. I have some specific hours of work and specific hours of fun—sport, swimming, hanging out, sleeping. But I never had a time of thinking, *I can't do anything*.

I feel like my society does not accept me, but I always say, "It's their problem, not mine." I pray for them—that they will have enough awareness and education to understand what I'm trying to do. Society wants me to get married when I'm twenty years old and wake up at six a.m., cleaning, and serving my men. This is not the life I want to live.

There is a word that means "against the feminine." *Patriarchy*. I hate it, and I feel like I'm totally opposing this idea in my life. I want to prove that I can do whatever men can do. And I can do it better than many of them. I see men looking at me, but I don't give a shit because me being a girl doesn't mean that if you look at me, I'm a bad girl. No. If you look at me, then it's your problem. You have a problem with controlling your desire. Then I go to do my work in places that are usually occupied with men, and when I enter, everyone's like, "You can't be here because you're the only girl." And I'm like, "So what? Does it mean that you will all rape me? Because I'm the only girl here?" You know, this is the main obstacle in my life. I'm here now just because I want to prove to myself I can go out at a late time and go back home, and no one will ever talk to me or do anything bad to me, because my brothers do it and they know no one will make trouble for them.

IF PALESTINE WASN’T OCCUPIED, EVERYONE WOULD WANT TO VISIT

I always say, if Palestine weren’t occupied, then everyone would want to visit. I’ve been to the West Bank, and it’s like a heaven. They have everything—mountains, hills, deserts, ancient cities. In Gaza we have the sea and a beautiful beach. But Palestine is this small besieged territory, and even the residents here can’t move around freely. All of this powerlessness over movement leaves Palestinians feeling very dependent on other countries, as though we can’t be independent.

I belong to this place for many reasons, because I was raised here. The apartment where I was born is my grandfather’s family house. And my family is originally from Gaza, so I do belong to this place. And I love it. I love everything about it.

I’m a journalist, and I want to have my name get bigger and bigger. I will never have a better place than Palestine in general to achieve this dream. I would love to leave Gaza for a month a year, just to explore around. Just to meet new people, to make new relationships, and work on improving my writing. I would like to do assignments abroad. Like if I can be sent to Turkey or Egypt, I would love to do that. But I’ll always return to Gaza. I’ll never live outside this country. Never.

Starting with reports of bombing on July 8 2014, Abeer covered the invasion of Gaza for Ha’aretz, Los Angeles Times, New York Daily News, +972 Magazine, BuzzFeed, *as well as through social media outlets such as Twitter and Instagram. Abeer investigated the shelling of UN schools, visited the morgues, and wrote a passionate open letter to Israeli citizens that was published in* Ha’aretz. *She posted on social media on August 3 that she had just woken up from her first night of sleep in over three weeks.*

[1] In 2006, Hamas won parliamentary elections in Gaza and largely took control of the government through democratic means. However, in June 2007, Hamas clashed with the Palestinian Authority, and its leading party, Fatah, in a series of armed confrontations. Following the armed conflict, Fatah and the Palestinian Authority withdrew from Gaza. For more information, see Appendix I, page 295.

[2] Gaza City is the largest city in the Gaza Strip. It has over 515,000 residents. The First Intifada was an uprising throughout the West Bank and Gaza against Israeli military occupation. It began in December 1987 and lasted until 1993. *Intifada* in Arabic means "to shake off." For more information, see Appendix I, page 295.

[3] Eid Al-Fitr and Eid Al-Adha are the two major feast days of Islam. Palestinian custom is to purchase new clothing for the feast days, when family members exchange visits.

[4] In 2000, there were seventeen Israeli settlements in Gaza and a little over 6,200 settlers.

[5] The *hijab* is a garment that covers the head and neck and is worn by many Muslim women throughout the world.

[6] In 2005, Israel announced a unilateral withdrawal plan from the Gaza Strip. For more information, see Appendix I, page 295.

[7] The Islamic University of Gaza is an independent university system in Gaza City. It serves just under 20,000 undergraduates.

[8] Gilad Shalit was an Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) soldier who was kidnapped in Israel in June 2006 by Gazan militias affiliated with Hamas. He was released as part of a prisoner swap in October 2011.

[9] Human Rights Watch is a non-profit organization based in the U.S. that investigates human rights abuses around the world. HRW conducts fact-finding missions with the help of journalists, lawyers, academics, and other experts.

[10] The strikes on Gaza in 2008 lasted around three weeks, from December 27, 2008, until a cease-fire on January 18, 2009. The invasion was named Operation Cast Lead by the Israeli military. For more information, see the Glossary, page 295.

[11] In January of 2011, millions of protesters throughout Egypt gathered to demand the ouster of Egypt's president, Hosni Mubarak, who had been in power for three decades.

[12] The Rafah border crossing is the sole border crossing from Gaza into Egypt, and since Israel imposed a blockade on Gaza in 2007, the Rafah crossing is often Gazans' only accessible point of exit from the Gaza Strip. The crossing is often closed as well, however, and since 2007 it is very difficult for Gazans to leave the Gaza Strip.

[13] For more information on the Dome of the Rock, see the Glossary, page 304.

[14] Operation Pillar of Defense was an eight-day assault by the Israeli military starting November 14, 2012. For more information, see the Glossary, page 304.

[15] Al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza City is the largest medical facility in Gaza.

WEST BANK FARMER WITH ISRAELI SETTLEMENT IN BACKGROUND

LAITH AL-HLOU

Farmer, day laborer, 32
Born in Bethlehem, West Bank
Interviewed in the West Bank

The first thing we notice as we drive to Laith Al-Hlou's home southeast of Bethlehem is the challenge presented by the roads. Some roads are almost too steep to climb, and others almost too muddy or rocky to navigate. The bottom of our car crunches and scrapes as we creep along toward his village.

Eventually we reach the compound where Laith lives with his family. Laith's house, the family's olive trees, and two other houses belonging to his extended family are surrounded by a short rock wall topped with barbed wire. When we pull up in our car, a dozen or more kids come spilling out to greet us—Laith's children and nieces and nephews. Some wear cracked plastic shoes, some wear no shoes at all.

Laith is a skinny thirty-two-year-old with a wife and five young kids. The seven of them sleep in a twelve-foot by twelve-foot room that includes a wardrobe, a crib for the baby, and twin bunk beds piled with blankets. This is the main room of the family's living space. They also have a small kitchen and toilet, all of which is on the second floor, above a chicken coop.

After a tour of his house, we sit with Laith on plastic chairs outside, and he tells us about the ways his community has changed since 1996, when Israeli settlers first moved near his home. His wife stays close by, and even though she is hard of hearing, she interjects periodically with her own stories.

Laith is one of up to 300,000 Palestinians living in Area C—the roughly 60 percent of the West Bank that is still under full military and administrative control by Israel following the Oslo Peace Accords of 1993.[1] *Area C also contains many of the West Bank's Israeli settlements, a collection of villages established by Israeli citizens following the occupation of the region in 1967. Today, there are 400,000–500,000 Israeli settlers in the West Bank outside of Jerusalem.*

The guard tower of a nearby settlement looms above Laith's property as we sit and talk. He tears up as he tells us that pressure from the settlements may force him to someday relocate his family.[2]

THE DAYS THAT HAVE PASSED ARE BETTER THAN THE DAYS THAT ARE NOW

I was born in Bethlehem in 1982, but I've lived here in my village southeast of Bethlehem for twenty-five years, since I was a little boy. My grandfather brought his whole family here from Bethlehem—my father and my uncle and their wives and kids. My extended family had land here going far back, and my grandfather inherited a piece of it. We have paperwork going back to 1943 that documents our right to these twelve acres and three houses.

The days that have passed, they are better than the days that are now. I remember how much fun it was as a child, taking care of my family's farm and chasing animals in the wilderness nearby, and just living on the land. We went on picnics. It was nice. It was normal. We worked and moved easily with no restrictions. We were happy, with a simple life.

Then, when I was around fifteen years old, the settlers came onto our land. There had been settlements in the area since I was a boy, but none so close. First, we started seeing roads going in sometime around 1996. That same year, the first settlers showed up in trailer homes. There were maybe fifteen to twenty trailers that appeared near our village. These first settlers were just a few families. But they were never without guns—AK-47s, big guns. The first thing they did was come to the village to see if they would have any trouble. They were pretty rough. There were some clashes at first over land. I remember one old man whom the settlers struck on the head—

he almost died. They also started building a fence around the settlement and some of our farmland right away. We had a fence around most of our property, and that helped keep the settlers from building directly on our land, but they took the land where our sheep graze outside the fence, about a thousand square feet of grazing land. They also took some of my father's sheep. And they took other villagers' land and sheep when they could.

At one point in 1996, the villagers had a big protest. We set up tents around the village, and there were about a hundred of us protesting the settlers taking our land. There were human rights groups at the protest, and we explained things to them. But it didn't matter. The settlers just attacked us, struck us with their guns. After that protest and some early clashes with the settlers, the villagers here just gave up.

THEY SAID A BULLDOZER WAS COMING

In the summer of 1997, the Israeli military came to my family's home and demolished our sheep pen. It was a Saturday evening, and sixty or seventy soldiers arrived in jeeps. They gathered up my family—I was with my parents, six brothers, and four sisters—and they told us to stay in a single room. We also saw them go to my uncles' houses, which were on the same property. At first they were just securing the area, making sure nobody protested or made trouble.

They said a bulldozer was coming. My father tried to argue with them. He said that the sheep pen was the first floor of what would be a new home that he was building for some of his kids. He needed to build a new structure to house his growing family. But the soldiers told him to be quiet and stay in the room, and then they locked us in. We could see what was happening out the window, and we watched for an hour and a half while they drove the sheep out and knocked down the house. We cried. We had just built the barn the year before, all by hand. It had taken months of work and it was a big investment.

We knew the soldiers might come. We'd gotten a demolition order the year before, while we were still building the first floor of the new structure. It was on our land, but the Israeli authorities said we didn't have a permit to build it. Many people in the village got similar notices that demolition was

planned on houses or buildings they'd built without permission from Israel. But the Israeli military only demolished two buildings that day—our sheep pen and one other home in the village, the home of some neighbors half a mile away. I'm not sure why they chose our structure. Afterward, we had to take turns sleeping outside with the sheep, to protect them. We live near a wilderness, and there were wild dogs and jackals to worry about. After we cleared away the rubble, there were still a couple of the walls left, so we put up a tarp and that became the new sheep pen.

I remember the feeling I had after that day, a suffocating feeling. Our family was large, it was growing, and we weren't allowed to build. My father wanted to grow the farm and build homes for his children, but he wasn't allowed to. His plan had been to build upward, adding floors to existing structures. The sheep pen was a new structure, and he wanted to build more floors on top of it for his children to live in when they started families of their own. But after the demolition, that was no longer possible.

My family tried again a couple of years later. Around 2000, we bought stone to build a new house on the property. We paid about 60,000 shekels.[3] This time, we tried to get a permit to build. There was so much we had to do, so many requests of us—money, negotiating with lawyers, endless paperwork. My father tried three times, but we couldn't get a permit. The stones we bought to build a new house are still on the property today. It's just a pile of marble that's been sitting there for fourteen years.

Many people in the village have gone elsewhere. Some of my uncle's family members who used to live on the property have gone to live abroad. The Israelis, the settlers, it seems like they want us to go away. If we didn't have this land, we'd go back to Bethlehem. It's a better place—it's easier to live there. But if we leave, we won't be able to protect the land, which has been in our family for generations.

WE ARE LIKE PRISONERS HERE

I got married a few years after the demolition on our sheep barn. I needed to find a job to make more money, since my wife and I wanted to start a family. So I found work at a marble company in a large settlement a couple of miles from here, and I worked there for three years. But work stopped

and the workers were let go in 2008. Around this time my wife and I were growing our family. We had children, and we needed money. So I began entering Israel illegally to work. I snuck in once to do some work on a construction site. I tried to sneak in a second time, but I was caught by the army. They put me in jail for two months, and I couldn't apply for a permit to work legally in Jerusalem for years.[4]

Since then I've worked around the family home. My family has sheep and goats, but I just take care of the chickens. I have about forty of them, and I get around ten eggs a day. The eggs we don't eat we sell in the market. We also grow most of our own vegetables—cucumbers, cabbage, beans. And we have about three hundred olive trees on the property. We make about eighty gallons of olive oil every year, and we sell what we don't use.

Most days during the week, I wake up at six-thirty in the morning and go to work by seven. Right now I'm working in the olive groves on the farm in the nearby settlement. It's the time of the season when we dry the olives. I actually don't like working in the sun—I get dizzy and I get headaches—so my job is to work inside where I help get the olives ready for packing. I usually work from seven to three, but sometimes I get overtime and stay until five. I've also done work in the nearby settlements preparing firewood, making bricks, doing other jobs. I talk to the boss, and he tells me where I should go to find work. In general, I like working in the settlements because I can travel back and forth easily, see my kids more. But the work I get around here doesn't pay much. I get about 100 shekels a day, usually. My friends who go into Jerusalem, they get a little more—150 or 175 shekels.[5] I used to go with them sometimes, but you need a special permit, and I haven't been able to get one since I was arrested.

The settlement near my home has about forty or fifty settlers. Then there's a handful of soldiers or private security guards that patrol the area in four or five jeeps. They have a tower set up nearby so they can watch everything. We can't move off our property without them seeing us. There are maybe ten to twelve of us Palestinian men who work in the settlement next door. Me personally, I'm not afraid of the settlers. They know me, I've worked in the settlements, so they go easy on me. But with my kids, some of my other family, some of my neighbors, the settlers can be rough. My

family and many of my neighbors feel like they're trapped at home, trapped in the limits of our own land. The settlements are all around us, and they have private security. If you leave your land, security guards will see you and come hassle you. We are like prisoners here in this area.

Sometimes, tourists will come onto this land to have picnics, especially in the springtime. Settlement soldiers will come and surround them and tell them the area's closed off. And for a long time, some settlers would come to our house maybe twice a month and shout at us, tell us to go away. They'd have guns with them, and they'd scare my children. They'd say things like, "If we see you in the street, we will shoot you. If we see you with the sheep over in those fields, we'll shoot you, we'll take you to jail. If you don't stay in the house, we'll shoot." They'd tell the children they couldn't go outside our fence. Now I don't really let my kids leave the property, except to go to school. And my kids have nightmares—they dream of being shot.

But it's actually gotten better. When the settlers first arrived, they were much rougher. Some of those people left, and some of the new people are a lot less threatening. But I remember an episode a while back where some settlers caught a man near the settlement. He was in the fields picking nettles, and some settlers spotted him. They took all of his clothes, and they made him walk home naked. Everyone in the village saw him, and he just kept his head down and walked all the way home. The settlers are nicer now, but they say the settlement is going to expand. It makes me feel like I'm choking. We already feel afraid all the time. I think it'll get worse when they get bigger.

THE BIGGEST PROBLEM IS WATER

We have electricity sometimes through our generator. But gas is expensive. We usually only turn it on around once a week to wash clothes in our washing machine. It's hot now, and we have no electricity for fans. In the winter, we have no heat to keep us warm. When it gets cold, we stay in bed all day under the blankets to stay warm.

The biggest problem for us is water. The pipes run through the settlement, and we're the last in line in the village. During parts of the summer, we hardly ever have water come through the pipes. We have to ask

the soldiers at the nearby military base to turn on the water. We have to ask a lot—for days—before they'll turn it on, and then they might turn it on for only a day or two.

We have to buy some water in tanks, and then we get some from a well on the property. The well doesn't have enough water in the summer, so we're buying a lot. Each tank is about 60 shekels and holds a few hundred gallons of water.[6] We also save water as much as we can. The water we bathe with, we'll save and use to flush our toilets. The children all wash using the same bucket of water. There's very little waste.

At the moment there are about thirty of us in the family living on the property, and about ten in the family who are temporarily living elsewhere for work. Then there are the animals and the olive trees. We have to make priorities. We make sure the children have enough water first, then the adults, then the animals. I don't think there will be enough water this year for our olive trees. We won't see any olives from them this year.

At the nearby settlements there's no problem with water. People living there don't have to have tanks on their roofs or anything, they get enough from the pipes. The settlements look like heaven to us. They even have swimming pools there.

And we still can't build on our property. My father has paperwork that goes back to 1943 that proves ownership of twelve acres, all the land we live on, and three of the structures on the property. They won't demolish those. But anything else we try to build on the property, they'll demolish if we don't have a building permit. Five years ago my father was going to build a small house for just him and my mother. He tried to do it without a permit, since it's so hard to get one. He got a demolition order immediately. So he turned the foundation he'd started into a small chicken coop. Next we tried to build another floor on the house he'd been living in. We built it, but we got a demolition order. The army gave us the order three years ago but haven't showed up with bulldozers yet. We don't know when they might come, but we expect it all the time.

WE LOVE THIS LIFE

We have two boys and three girls, our youngest is one and a half. We have one room where we all sleep, and then we have the kitchen. Still, it isn't enough, and we can't build. The kids, they need a place to run around and play. There's no electricity, so they can't even watch TV. They spend a lot of time fighting each other.

There are things I love about living here. It's not the city. It's not overcrowded. It's simple to make a life here—we raise animals, live off the land. We love this life. It's normal for me. We are coping with the situation, we are coping with the settlements. We have lived through hardships from the beginning. I'd like to move, but I can't leave my land here. So if I go, what is the nature of my life? I work in the settlement, so it is very difficult for me to move and find work. My land, my family, my father and mother are all here on this land. Even if I move, my parents will not go.

But still, we feel like we are suffocating. If the settlements keep growing and surround our property, our lives will be hell. Right now, we are depressed from being worried all the time. I can't describe my feelings. We feel inferior, and no one helps. The settlements will only grow, and so will my family. Right now I'm just trying to make money, so that we can have a better life. For my children, I hope they live in safety, that they are not hurt or attacked, that they study and are good at school. Knowledge is the last thing that remains for us to achieve, and I want them to study at university. People we know in Bethlehem, they have water, electricity, it's a much better life. A number of villagers have moved already—they've gone out looking for something better. Someday we might move. Here, there's no room to build and grow.

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[1] Following the Oslo Accords in 1993, the West Bank was carved up into three fragmented administrative areas. Area A is made up primarily of large cities and is fully controlled by the Palestinian Authority. Area B comprises some 440 villages and is under Palestinian civil control and Israeli security control. Area C includes mostly rural areas and numerous Israeli settlements. Area C is fully controlled by the Israeli military. For more on administrative Areas A, B, and C in the West Bank, see the Glossary, page 304.

[2] We have changed names and obscured details about this narrator's location out of concern for the safety of his family.

[3] At the time, 60,000 shekels equaled approximately US$15,000.

[4] Palestinians in the West Bank need special permits to enter Jerusalem. Some permits are granted on a one time only basis for special reasons, and some are granted for access to work in Israel. The application process can be difficult and expensive, so many Palestinians risk imprisonment by entering the city illegally.

[5] 100 shekels equals approximately US$29. 175 shekels equals approximately US$51.

[6] 60 shekels equals approximately US$17.

GUARD TOWER AT DAMUN PRISON, ISRAEL

ABDELRAHMAN AL-AHMAR

Lawyer, 46
Born in Deheisheh refugee camp, West Bank
Interviewed in Bethlehem, West Bank

Abdelrahman Al-Ahmar lives with his wife and four children in a small apartment complex on the edge of the refugee camp where he grew up. The complex is surrounded by trees and garden greenery and is also home to four of his brothers and their families, as well as rabbits, birds, puppies, and even a horse. During the course of several interviews, the house is full of the sounds of his children playing. Sometimes they come to sit and listen to their father's story, interjecting parts of the narrative they know by heart.

Abdelrahman's comfortable house is a retreat from the harsh conditions he has faced his entire life. He was born in the Deheisheh refugee camp, where his family struggled against extreme poverty and regular attacks from soldiers and settlers. He later spent nearly twenty years in prison, most of it in administrative detention, where he was interrogated using torture techniques that have now been outlawed by the Israeli High Court.[1] *In 1999, the court ruled that the Israeli Security Agency (Shin Bet) does not have legal authority to use physical means of interrogation. It found tactics must be "fair and reasonable" and not cause the detainee to suffer. According to the Supreme Court case, a common practice during questioning was shaking prisoners violently enough to lead to unconsciousness, brain damage, or even death (in at least one reported case). However, in a society where 40 percent of men have spent time in prison, thousands of people still bear the physical and psychological marks of these methods.*

Abdelrahman seems reserved at first during our initial meeting—he speaks little and watches us carefully as we ask questions. But as he relaxes, his dark humor and natural gift for storytelling begin to emerge. He switches between English, Arabic, and Hebrew as he speaks, and the only time he becomes quiet again is when talking about the most extreme forms of torture he endured. However, he also tells us about how the most difficult moments in his life have inspired him to become a leader in his community.

WE DIDN'T EVEN HAVE COCA COLA

I'm the same age as the occupation. The war of '67 started in June, and my mother was pregnant with me at the time.[2] She and my father were living in the Deheisheh refugee camp in Bethlehem.[3] They'd been pushed out of their homes in Ramla during the war in '48, and that's when they'd moved to the camp.[4] They lived in tents in camp for over ten years, and then my father was able to build a small house in camp in the fifties. Then during the war in '67, a lot of people fled the camp and ended up living in Jordan, especially in Amman.[5] But my father said, "We're not leaving again." He didn't want to lose his home again. So during the war in '67, my father stayed to protect the house while my mother went up in the woods and hid for a few days. She gave birth to me a few months later in the camp, with the help of a midwife.[6]

I remember the camp of my childhood was a neighborhood of shacks made of cinder blocks and aluminum roofs. Most people in the camp built their own houses, like my father had. We all had leaky ceilings, no plumbing, no bathrooms. There were just a few public restrooms we would all share, and the toilets would flush into the gutters in the streets. We didn't have showers. We'd heat up water in a basin and wash with that. We depended on UNRWA for clothes.[7] I remember getting clothes twice a year, and they were often the wrong size, and sometimes all that was available were girl clothes. We were so cold in the winter. For heat, we had fires in old oil barrels outside our homes, and families would gather around them to warm up. I remember the fires would get so high, we couldn't see the faces

of the people on the other side of the barrel. And there was so much disease—cholera, infections of all sorts.

Growing up, we could hear our next-door neighbors every day. We knew their fights, conversations, everything. And there were so many places that you couldn't get to by car because the spaces between buildings were too narrow. You had to walk between the houses.

As children from the camp, we'd feel different from other kids when we went out into Bethlehem, the city. We would see kids who had bicycles, but we didn't have any. They had good clothes, but we didn't have them. They even had Coca Cola! My parents weren't accustomed to the kind of poverty we were living in. They were born in villages with homes on large pieces of land. When I was a kid, my father used to work in Israel. He was a stonecutter. But he wasn't making enough money for the family—he had four boys and two girls to support. There was no one in Deheisheh with money. So everybody was struggling financially, but at least it gave us this feeling of being equal.

OUR WINDOWS WERE ALWAYS OPEN, SO WE GOT USED TO THE SMELL OF TEARGAS

I felt pressure from the Israeli army and Israeli settlers at an early age. The most difficult issue that we had to deal with was the settlers. I was only six years old when the settlers started coming through the camp in the early seventies, so I grew up seeing them. The main road from the settlements in the south runs through Bethlehem to Jerusalem, and it goes right through the camp. I think the settlers who passed through saw Deheisheh as something they needed to control.

The settlers were led by a man named Rabbi Moshe Levinger, who saw all of the West Bank as part of Israel.[8] They wanted Israel to claim the land around the camp, and they found ways to make life miserable for us. They would come in buses maybe once a week. They'd get off and start shooting randomly in the refugee camp with live bullets. They'd shout, throw stones, provoke fights. Whenever anyone tried to fight back, the settlers would alert Israeli soldiers who would chase us through the streets and fire tear-gas

canisters. Our windows were always open, so we got used to the smell of teargas.

I remember settlers entering my UNRWA school and smashing desks, doors, windows. The teachers couldn't protect us. There was always a sense of fear and insecurity. When I was younger, these things affected me tremendously. They affected my relationship with my teachers and the way I looked at them. I kind of lost respect for them because I'd seen them degraded. And after some time, other students and I stopped listening to them because we knew they were powerless.

Then in the early eighties, the military built a fence around the camp. It was twenty feet high, and the only way in and out was a gate leading to the Hebron–Jerusalem Road, the one that the settlers passed through. I once heard that some tourists who came to Bethlehem saw the fence and wondered if it was the wall of a city zoo! In the camp, we had a curfew—we had to be in by seven p.m., or the soldiers guarding the entryway wouldn't let us back in through the gate. And we couldn't leave after curfew under any circumstances. Some people died because they couldn't go to the hospital after the gate closed at seven.

Around the same time, settlers brought trailers across from the camp and tried to establish an outpost there. I remember being stuck in the camp after curfew and hearing the patriotic music of the settlers blaring through the night.

The soldiers worked closely with the settlers most of the time. When I was fourteen, I got a backpack—the first I ever owned. Before that, I would carry my books in plastic bags, like most kids in the camp. I was so happy I finally had a backpack. It was green. My dad bought it for me. I was going to school one morning, and a group of six soldiers and an armed man in civilian clothes—a settler—called me over. The settler kicked me and slapped me and then took my backpack and threw it into the gutter. I tried to get it out of the gutter, but the soldiers hit me and threw the backpack back in. My books were wet and ruined, and they still didn't allow me to get the pack. I watched them do the same thing to some of my friends—they threw their books in the gutter, too.

At the UNRWA school, they would give us the books for free. I told them what the soldiers had done, and they gave me new books. But I had to put them back in plastic bags again. Of course, the soldiers knew the

backpack was important to me because they could see how impoverished we all were and that we were deprived of everything.

Refugees in the camp would retaliate against the settlers by throwing stones. I started throwing stones at age ten. Kids a little older might be a little more organized. Different groups of kids would decide to do something—a group of five over here, a group of six over there. By the time I was thirteen, I was among them. We started to incite other children to put flags up. At that time, it was illegal to hang the Palestinian flag.[9] So, we would tell the kids to hang the flag and to write slogans on the walls. That was also illegal then. You could be arrested by the Israeli army and go to prison.

When they saw us throwing stones, the soldiers or settlers might shoot. When they shot at us, yes, we were afraid. But with time, with all the injustice and the frustration, we were just stuck, and we didn't care if we died. But we thought throwing stones made a difference. We saw the settlers as the occupiers, and they were the source of injustice and deprivation, so we had to fight back. This was before the First Intifada, but for us in the camp it was already Intifada—it was always Intifada.[10]

"WHAT DID YOU DO? WHAT DID YOU DO? WHAT DID YOU DO?"

Eventually, my friends and I graduated from throwing stones to thinking about throwing Molotov cocktails. It wasn't hard to make a weapon out of a bottle of kerosene and a wick. We wanted to throw them at the outpost set up by Moshe Levinger and at the soldiers who were helping the settlers to come and wreck our neighborhood. By this point I was fifteen, almost sixteen. Some in our group were younger—one was fourteen. We made a couple Molotov cocktails and tested them out by smashing them against walls in the camp when we thought nobody was looking.

December 11, 1984, was a cold, snowy night. I was home asleep, and suddenly soldiers swarmed in. I was cuffed and put in a vehicle with some other boys from my group that had already been arrested. That night they picked up me and four of my friends, and we were driven to Al-Muskubiya.[11]

When we got to the interrogation center, it was very chaotic. There were maybe forty guys in all who had been arrested and brought to Al-Muskubiya that night. For the five of us, they took off all of our clothes, stripped us naked. Then they tightened our handcuffs, took us outside in an open area, and put bags on our heads. The snow was coming down, and we were naked out there. I couldn't see the others, but I could hear their teeth chattering, and the sound of the handcuffs shaking was so loud. The cold weather still bothers me now—it makes me remember that night. This is where we stayed for forty-five days between interrogations. Our bodies turned blue, we were out in the cold so long.

My interrogation lasted two months. During the interrogations, they beat me, and there was loud music playing the whole time. We were allowed to go to the bathroom just once a day. They would tie our hands to the pipes. It was really painful for me. After some time, I stopped feeling my arms—sometimes I didn't know if I still had them or if they had been amputated. There was constant beating, all over my body, to the point where my skin would be as black as my jacket. If I lost consciousness, they would throw water on me or slap me so I'd wake up.

This mark on my wrist is actually from the handcuffs during that time in prison. The handcuffs were so tight, they cut to the bone. I still have marks on my legs from the beatings. They wouldn't give us any medical treatment. And the interrogators wouldn't ask you direct, obvious questions. They would just keep saying, "What did you do? What did you do? What did you do?" And that was it. With all the beating, I couldn't focus anymore, even if I was conscious. I couldn't remember anything that I did from the time before prison, even if I had anything to confess. Most of the other kids told the police what they'd done—they made some Molotov cocktails and tested them out. I didn't tell them anything. Not because I was being secretive, but because I was too confused and disoriented from the beatings. It was a very hostile environment.

Sometimes they would keep me awake for many days straight before they gave me four hours of sleep. And with the pressure of sleep deprivation, I started hallucinating, and I didn't actually know what was happening around me. I would imagine I was in a kindergarten and there were a lot of crying kids causing all this chaos, but I couldn't do anything to

calm them down. I stopped knowing if what was happening was real or just a product of my imagination.

Eventually, a lawyer came to visit me. Her name was Lea Tsemel. She was an Israeli lawyer.[12] She came to meet me in the visiting room one day and she gave me cigarettes. She told me she was taking on my case. I was so confused. I just asked her if what was happening to me was real, or was I just trapped in my imagination. So many times I was convinced that the prison was full of snakes. I asked her about that, and she told me I was just hallucinating. She told me about my charges and let me know we'd be in court soon.

There was one police officer who was nice. One morning, I asked to go to the bathroom, and the interrogators wouldn't let me go until midnight. When this one police officer saw me in pain because I had to go so badly, he said, "Godammit! What happened to these people? Why do they torture people? Godammit!" He was angry, and he let me go to the bathroom. Then he brought me tea and cigarettes and said, "Rest, rest." This was very risky for him, and I really appreciated it.

The whole interrogation was two months. I was afraid that they were going to kill me and my friends, because we had heard all these terrible stories of torture. I had an uncle who had been arrested a while before, and I knew that he'd died in prison. He participated in a hunger strike, and when the prison guards force-fed him, he choked to death.

The main thing that consumed my thinking was that these people were crazy, and they wanted to torture me and mentally destroy me. And they would actually say it right to our faces. They would tell us, "We want to ruin you psychologically." In fact, many prisoners do become mentally ill. Some of them die. I didn't go crazy. I focused on all the other people suffering besides me. And also, I think people who are really religious have a hard time with this kind of abuse sometimes. They pray to God for help, and when none comes, it breaks them mentally. But that wasn't me, and I was able to focus on the future and what I needed to do to get myself out of that situation.

After two months of interrogation, my friends and I were taken to trial and charged with terrorist activities. The judge sentenced us to four to six

years each. My mother was in the courtroom, and she fainted when she heard the sentence.

WE WERE ALL STILL DREAMING OF GROWING A MUSTACHE

After my sentence, I was sent to Damun Prison.[13] I learned more in prison than I would have at a university. I met some leaders of the resistance. I was so proud of myself. They were the big fighters. And the other boys I was arrested with, they were all so happy. We thought we were so grown up, even though we were all still dreaming of growing a mustache. We'd actually shave four times a day to try to get our beards to grow in stronger so we could look older. I acted angry about my sentence—not because I thought it was too long, but because I thought it was too short! They gave me four years, I wanted twelve years. I thought it was sort of an honor.

In Damun, I was in with a bunch of Israeli mafia guys, drug dealers—all sorts of criminals. I think the soldiers wanted to put young guys in the resistance in with real degenerates, sort of to corrupt us. But we all got along, and before long I was one of the leaders in prison. I became the representative of a group of young prisoners in dealing with the guards. I'd voice our demands and objections to the ways we were being treated.

In 1986, I led a hunger strike. We were actually protesting about not getting enough food. Besides that, it was winter, and there was no heat, and we only had one thin blanket each. And we weren't getting enough exercise time outside. So there were dozens of us not eating as a protest. I remember we used to dream of food at night. The Israeli soldiers, they would tease us. They'd have barbecues outside the walls of our cells, and the smell would come into our cells through the windows.

We stuck at it for eighteen days, and on the eighteenth day I announced we were going on a water strike as well. The guards quickly brought in doctors from the Red Cross, and they told us that we'd be dead in two days if we tried that. So I said, "Okay, we won't do that." But it was enough to make the guards think we were crazy enough to try. The next day, the prison administrators came and agreed to our demands—more food, two more blankets at night, and fifteen more minutes of exercise time a day. It felt like a big victory. For two weeks afterward, we had to relearn to eat, like we

were babies all over again. All our stomachs could handle was milk, a little soft potato, that sort of thing.

So I had a reputation as a dangerous prisoner. Not because I was violent, but because I could lead the prisoners to rebel against our conditions. The authorities decided to transfer me to Ashkelon, which was where they put the prisoners they considered the most dangerous.[14] Inside Ashkelon, there were a lot of leaders of Palestine's resistance movement. To Israel, this was where the worst of the worst went. But as a Palestinian, I felt much safer in Ashkelon than I had at Damun.

Those of us who were young and in prison for the first time started to study. We wanted to know everything. We would sit with the older men in Ashkelon, and they told us about their experience. The older prisoners would even organize more formal education—lectures and lessons every day. These were guys who had been in prison forever. Some of them had been in since 1967. I think a few of those guys had been around to hear Jesus lecture! So they had a lot of wisdom to pass on.

We learned about history, economics, philosophy. We had to wake up at six in the morning and start reading and studying. At ten there was a lecture until noon, and then there was a ninety-minute break. After the break, we had to write an article—it could be political, educational, whatever. But we had to write something. Every day one of the inmates had to lecture the others about what he had written and read earlier. And then we would go back to reading. They served us dinner at seven, and then between seven and ten we could read, and then we would go back to sleep. If we didn't finish our writing, we could stay up late and write. We didn't have enough time for all our activities. It became an addiction, and I was consumed with, *What am I going to read next? What am I going to write?*

Every inmate had his own specialty. Some of them were political, some of them philosophical. One specialized in economics, another in Marx. Some people taught chemistry and explosives inside the prison. We also learned languages. Some of the prisoners knew Greek, Russian, Turkish, so they would pass on their languages. Getting into Ashkelon for me was like getting accepted to Harvard or Oxford, or even better!

But the treatment in the prison was still very harsh. Solitary confinement at Ashkelon was the worst in all the prisons in Israel. Prisoners

could be isolated from others for years.[15] One inmate I knew lost his mind because of all the pressure from solitary. He needed psychiatric help.

To protest this, we set all the cells on fire. Every prisoner was part of it. We all piled up clothes in the middle of our cells and lit them with smuggled matches. The smoke was terrible, and many of us suffocated. Forty-eight prisoners had to be hospitalized, but our protest got attention. They still used solitary confinement to torture people afterward, though.

The relationships you form inside the prison are very strong. There are a lot of people from different cities—Ramallah, Nablus, Hebron, so many places. So there's a lot to learn, and you become more knowledgeable about the situations in other cities. When you get out of prison, you're going to stay friends with them. And they're really influential in their own societies. So many of the leaders of the First Intifada met in prison.

I got out of prison in 1989, during the First Intifada. I was still only twenty, but I was more influential in our society because people respect someone who's been in jail—we weren't seen as criminals, but leaders.

I WAS JUST LIKE THE POPE

I didn't stay out long after my release in 1989. I was only out for six months. I hadn't done anything this time, but because of my record and people I knew, and because it was the Intifada, I was rounded up.[16]

This time after my trial I was sent to Ktzi'ot Prison.[17] In Ktzi'ot, I improved my Hebrew. Ktzi'ot was like a big open-air prison with lots of tents, and one of the tents was the "Hebrew tent," where only Hebrew was spoken. I taught Hebrew lessons there and translated Hebrew-language newspapers for the other inmates.

I had a lot of experience and I knew a lot, so the new inmates would ask me how to do things. I was just like the Pope. They would respect me and ask me for things. In prison culture, if you're an alumnus of prison, you get special treatment from both the inmates and the wardens and guards. I would get the best bed in the tent, you know, the one in the corner. The guards also gave me special treatment because I was an asset to the prison.

They knew that I could influence everyone else, and if I said something, everyone was going to listen to me. It was a give and take.

I was out of prison in 1994, but of course, the Israeli authorities kept an eye on me. The authorities have this obsession, that once someone like me has been to prison, then we're a terrorist for life. I got picked up a few times, and sometimes I'd be held for a day, sometimes for two weeks. Then, in 1995, I was arrested, and this time they took me to Al-Muskubiya. They didn't have charges, they just wanted to interrogate me about people I knew. During the interrogation, I was tortured.

After twelve days of not being allowed to sleep, not getting enough to eat, that's when the interrogators started shaking me. There are two kinds of shaking they'd do—one of the head and neck only, and one for the whole body. Of course when they start after nearly two weeks of no food or no sleep, you can't really physically resist at all. You're too weak, and your neck starts to flop around, you don't get oxygen, and you pass out. They'd bring us prisoners close to death.

I remember waking up in the hospital. I'd been taken to Hadassah.[18] After I was better, I was taken back to Al-Muskubiya and interrogated some more. They'd use other methods, too. One thing the interrogators liked to do was to make the handcuffs really tight and bind me to a chair that slanted downward. They would leave me like that for twelve days at a time, with the handcuffs slowly cutting into my wrists. They would also put a dirty bag over my head that was soaked in vomit or that had been dunked in the toilet. After twelve days, they'd give me four hours of rest. This went on for months. Sometimes they'd only ask me a few questions, for just fifteen minutes a day. And then I'd be bound up in the chair for the rest of the day. Sometimes they'd say they were going to give me "stomach exercises," and then two interrogators would twist my body in opposite directions while my hands were cuffed. They would put me in these stress positions until I threw up or fainted.

They didn't have anything to accuse me of in Al-Muskubiya, but they didn't want me out on the streets. Also, they wouldn't let my lawyer see me for many weeks. Finally, a lawyer came. She was a new lawyer I'd never heard of named Allegra Pacheco. I think as a prisoner, I had developed a

keen sense of who was dangerous, who was safe, and who I could trust. I knew I could trust Allegra right away.

After six months, they sent me to Megiddo Prison in northern Israel. They never charged me with anything. They just gave me a one-year sentence of administrative detention that they renewed for a second year. By this time, I was a real expert at life in prison. I was able to convince some of the guards that I was a Jew because of my good Hebrew. They used to ask me, “You’re among Arabs. How can we help you?” I asked them for a mobile phone, because we couldn’t have one inside prison. They gave me the phone.

I got away with other tricks because of my good Hebrew. We had newspapers inside, and there were ads in the back. One ad was for a pizza place. I used one of our smuggled phones and called the pizza place, and I pretended as if I was the prison director. I ordered seventy-five slices, enough for all the inmates. And the pizza guy told me they’d deliver in two hours. In three hours, the prison director came to my tent and gave me a long look. He asked, “Do you still want pizza?” So I answered him, “If you’re going to give it to us, why not?” He was pretty mad. He said, “I know that you’re the one who asked for the pizza, because you have really good Hebrew. Now you’re going to solitary.” So I had to spend two weeks in solitary. There was another ad in the newspaper for belly dancers. I wanted to call and ask for dancers as well, but because I got busted for the pizzas I didn’t have the nerve to do it.

THE JUDGES HAD NO MERCY

During the time I was in prison, I kept seeing my lawyer, Allegra. She helped me appeal every six months during my administrative detention hearings, and she kept me thinking about the future. I must have proposed to her twenty times while I was at Megiddo. She told me I was crazy.

Finally, I got out of administrative detention in 1998, and I started working for human rights groups, like the Palestinian Human Rights Monitoring Group and B’Tselem.[19] We’d investigate cases of human rights abuses against Palestinians. And I stayed in touch with Lea and Allegra and other lawyers who were fighting in courts to end the torture of prisoners. In

1999, they took some cases to the high court in Israel, and they won a huge victory that made certain kinds of torture illegal.

It was also around this time that I got Allegra to agree to marry me. I think I just had to ask her enough times. As a prisoner, I'd learned to be persistent in speaking out for what I wanted, and I used the same tactics to win over Allegra. We just sort of agreed we might get married someday soon, and then she went to the U.S. on a fellowship. She was working on a book about how a Second Intifada might be right around the corner. But she didn't finish it, because the Second Intifada started in 2000 while she was still writing and that spoiled the concept of her whole book!

During the Second Intifada, I was still working for B'Tselem, and sometimes I'd sneak into Jerusalem to talk to Palestinians for reports on human rights abuses. I also worked with Gideon Levy, a reporter for *Ha'aretz*, which is Israel's major newspaper. I'd show him around the refugee camps and help with stories. When I went to Jerusalem, I'd always bring a really nice leather briefcase, so I'd look like a businessman. But in May 2001, I was stopped by a police officer in Jerusalem and arrested for not having a proper permit to travel into the city. So once again I was headed to prison.

I was taken back to Al-Muskubiya. Already, interrogation had changed, but not much. They still put me on a chair that was angled downward with tight cuffs. But now, instead of hitting, shaking, that sort of thing, they tried to mess with my mind more. They would do things like show me a photo of my house in ruins and tell me it had been demolished. But it was all Photoshop work.

At the time, Allegra was in the United States. She was supposed to be done with her fellowship and come back to Israel in June. She was in Boston trying on a wedding dress when she heard I'd been picked up. She got back just in time to represent me during my administrative detention hearing. She showed up along with Lea, her mentor and my first lawyer. They had a photographer from *Ha'aretz* with them who was going to testify on my behalf, and they brought a lot of snacks—*burek*, cola, and cigarettes.[20] Allegra also brought wedding bands with her. We got to have a reunion in the lawyer's meeting room, and that's where we announced that we were engaged. We had a little party with the burek and cola, and then

Lea took some pastry to the judges to tell them we were getting engaged, and she asked if we could have a little more time in the meeting room. Meanwhile, the *Ha'aretz* photographer took pictures of us exchanging rings. It was beautiful!

But the judges had no mercy. The prosecutors kept bringing up how I was mean to my interrogators, cursed at them, called them sons of bitches, and how I wouldn't cooperate. That was their big case for me being a security risk to Israel, just that I wasn't nice enough in the interrogation room. Allegra was wonderful—she demanded that the judges look at the deep grooves in my wrists from my recent interrogation. But they refused. And so I ended up spending another year in administrative detention.

When I got out in May 2002, Allegra and I were married, and she was five months pregnant when I was arrested again in November. This was right in the middle of the Second Intifada still, and a lot of former prisoners were being arrested. The night they picked me up, they were looking for my brother. But because I had a record, they decided they'd pick me up as well. I was sentenced to six months administrative detention and sent to Ofer Prison.[21] I was in prison when our son Quds was born in April 2003. Allegra was all by herself during the birth. When June 2003 came around, I was up for another renewal of detention. This would have been the seventeenth six-month detention I'd been given during my lifetime. My lawyer Lea tried to bring photos of Quds into court near Ofer to show me. It would have been the first time I'd seen my son, but the judge refused to let me see the photos. He gave me another sentence of six months. During the hearing, I was able to slip the photos of my son into my prison uniform when nobody was looking, so I at least had the photos of my son in prison with me. My detention was renewed twice more for a year and a half total, so I didn't get to go home and meet Quds until he was almost two. By that time I had spent almost seventeen years in prison all together, with at least thirteen of those years being in administrative detention without charges.

THIS IS LIFE FOR THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE

I've been out of prison since 2004. When I got out the last time, I started studying law, and now I'm a lawyer, like Allegra. Last January, I was in

military court to help my friend. I argued his case in front of a judge who has sentenced me to administrative detention many times before. I was going to rub it into his face that I was a lawyer now. But they didn't let me enter the courtroom.

I also defend prisoners who have been arrested by the Palestinian Authority.[22] The conflict with the Palestinian Authority is even more complicated than the occupation. I make visits to the prisoners in the PA prisons, and in some cases they get tortured and humiliated there even more than with the Israelis. I visit my clients in prison every day. And I sit down and talk to them and listen to them. The conditions are extremely harsh. In the important cases, the information from the interrogation is shared among the intelligence agencies of the Americans, Israelis, and the Palestinians, together.

I still see many of the people from my time in prison, including other prisoners and my first lawyer, Lea Tsemel. She's like a mother to my wife and me. She still visits me now. She's a good person.

Now we have two girls and two boys. It's even. The boys are ten and seven, and then the girls, five and two. To raise a baby girl is much easier than raising a boy. They're much calmer, and they're nicer, easier to deal with. Boys just want to rebel all the time. But my boys are not aggressive. The kids just want to play. They're very sweet.

Of course, I worry about my kids and the situation they're growing up in. I want my kids to grow up in a good atmosphere, with justice and liberty and freedom, and a life with no problems. We've been deprived of so many things, and that, of course, always takes its toll on you. So whatever my kids ask from me I get for them. I buy them expensive bicycles and that sort of thing. Allegra says no, but I spoil them because I was deprived of so many things when I was a child. I want my children to have what I never had. I admit, I have a psychological problem with shoes! I buy them for my kids all the time. Every one of my four children has dozens of pairs of shoes. Every time Allegra asks me, "Why did you buy that?" I say, "You can't possibly understand." One of my daughters also has five little backpacks.

I would like to go to the U.S. to visit my wife's parents. My wife is an American, but the U.S. government rejected our visa application on security

grounds.[23] What's the security problem? I haven't been convicted of any crime by an Israeli court since I was a child. I've been trying to get a visa for a long time. The lawyer for the visa asked for $120,000. We've stopped trying.

From a physical aspect, I do still have effects from the torture. I still can't feel my left hand completely due to the nerve damage I got from being handcuffed. And it's not easy to live with the fact that I went through such a horrible experience. It has impacted me.

I probably would be different today if I hadn't gone to prison. Probably I would've gone to med school instead of law school. But I've never really thought much about how my life would be different if I hadn't gone to prison, because this is life for thousands—millions even—of people in refugee camps in Palestine, in Lebanon, or in Syria. It's not a personal problem, it's a broader thing. I want to solve it because it affects everybody else, not just me. If the situation doesn't change, my son Quds may soon have the same experience. This is a problem for generation after generation—we've been fighting for sixty-five years. It's going to be the same thing until we break the cycle.

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[1] Administrative detention is a system of incarceration without official charges used by occupying military forces. For more information, see the Glossary, page 304.

[2] The war in 1967 is known as the Six-Day War. For more on the war and the subsequent occupation of the West Bank, see Appendix I, page 295.

[3] The Deheisheh refugee camp was established for 3,000 refugees in 1949 and is one of three refugee camps in the Bethlehem metropolitan area. Deheisheh is located just south of the city. Current estimates of the camp's population range up to 16,000 persons living in an area that is roughly one square mile.

[4] Ramla is a city of 65,000 people in central Israel. Today the city is approximately 20 percent Muslim—most Arabs fled the city during the 1948 war.

[5] Amman, the capital of neighboring Jordan, is a city of around 2 million residents. Amman grew rapidly with the influx of Palestinian refugees after 1967.

[6] In 1967, the Israelis seized the West Bank from Jordan, which had administered the region since 1948. For more information on the wars in 1948 and 1967, see Appendix I, page 295.

[7] The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) has provided services such as education and medical care to Palestinian refugees since 1949. For more information, see the Glossary, page 304.

[8] Rabbi Moshe Levinger was born in Jerusalem in 1935 and helped lead the movement to settle the West Bank after the Six-Day War. He was especially active in asserting settler presence around Hebron, a large West Bank city fifteen miles south of the Deheisheh camp.

[9] After the Oslo Accords were put into full effect in 1995, Bethlehem was administered by the Palestinian Authority. Between 1967 and 1995, however, Israel maintained full control of the region and outlawed symbols of Palestinian nationalism such as flags.

[10] The First Intifada was an uprising throughout the West Bank and Gaza against Israeli military occupation. It began in December 1987 and lasted until 1993. *Intifada* in Arabic means "to shake off." For more information, see Appendix I, page 295.

[11] Al-Muskubiya ("the Russian Compound") is a large compound in Jerusalem that was built in the nineteenth century to house an influx of Russian Orthodox pilgrims into the city during the time of Ottoman rule. Today, the compound houses Israeli police headquarters, criminal courts, and a prison and interrogation center.

[12] Lea Tsemel is a prominent human rights lawyer in Israel.

[13] Damun Prison is in northern Israel, near Haifa. The facilities were once used as a tobacco warehouse during the British Mandate, but they were converted to a prison by Israel in 1953. It houses up to 500 prisoners.

[14] Now called Shikma Prison, the facility is a maximum-security prison just outside Ashkelon, a city of 115,000 people just north of the Gaza Strip. Shikma was built following the Six-Day War in 1967 as a lockup for security prisoners in the newly occupied Palestinian territories.

[15] In 1986, the same year Abdelrahman was transferred to Shikma Prison, Israeli nuclear technician Mordechai Vanunu was captured by Israeli intelligence officers in Rome and sentenced by military tribunal to Shikma for leaking details of Israel's secret nuclear weapons program. He spent eleven of his eighteen years in prison in solitary confinement.

[16] Abdelrahman was arrested under suspicion of being a member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). For more information, see the Glossary, page 304.

[17] The Ktzi'ot Prison is a large, open-air prison camp in the vast Negev desert, located forty-five miles southwest of Be'er Sheva. Ktzi'ot was opened in 1988 and closed in 1995 after the end of the First Intifada, and then reopened in 2002 during the Second Intifada. According to Human Rights Watch, one out of every fifty West Bank and Gazan males over the age of sixteen was held at Ktzi'ot in 1990 during the middle of the First Intifada.

[18] Hadassah Medical Center is a health care complex in Jerusalem.

[19] The Palestinian Human Rights Monitoring Group was founded in 1996 partly by members of the Palestinian Authority to record instances of human rights abuses in the West Bank and Gaza.

B’Tselem was founded by Israeli citizens in 1989 to document human rights abuses in the occupied territories.

[20] *Burek* is a traditional Turkish pastry stuffed with cheese, potatoes, or other fillings.

[21] Ofer Prison is a large open air prison near Ramallah. At the time of Abdelrahman’s arrest in 2003, there were approximately 1,000 Palestinian men and women serving administrative detention sentences.

[22] The Palestinian Authority was chartered to administer parts of the West Bank and Gaza following the Oslo Accords in 1993. As part of the Oslo agreement, the Palestinian Authority is responsible for security control in parts of the West Bank such as Bethlehem. For more on the Palestinian Authority, see the Glossary, page 304.

[23] It is very difficult for any Palestinians who have spent time in prison to travel, and especially to get visas to the United States, even if they were held under administrative detention and never charged with a crime.

INTERSECTION IN RAMALLAH, WEST BANK

RIYAM KAFRI ABU LABAN

Chemistry professor, blogger, 36
Born in Amman, Jordan
Interviewed in Ramallah, West Bank

Riyam Kafri Abu Laban was born in Amman, Jordan. Her father was one of thousands of Palestinians not allowed to return to their homes after the Six-Day War of 1967—marking a second wave of Palestinian refugees after the massive displacement of 1948. Riyam's parents waited for the opportunity to return to the West Bank instead of leaving to pursue lucrative jobs elsewhere. They finally returned to the West Bank in 1980, after years of legal wrangling. On returning to Palestine, they settled near Ramallah.

We interview Riyam in her spacious kitchen in Ramallah. As she talks, she stirs pots, washes dishes, and checks the oven, effortlessly putting together a dinner for six as she tells her life story. We learn that this kind of multi-tasking is normal for her. She is the mother of twins, teaches organic chemistry at Al-Quds University, and she helps to run the university's liberal arts program (designed in conjunction with Bard College). She also writes a blog with a fellow professor, and her posts are sharply observed explorations of daily life in Palestine.

Writing is Riyam's passion, but she came to it later in her career. She received her Ph.D. in chemistry from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville and had the opportunity to live a comfortable life in the United States. She chose instead to return to Palestine where she started teaching, and she found her voice as a writer in describing life as a resident of the West Bank. She writes that Palestine is "like a distant land that inhabits the warmest chambers of one's heart, so close yet so unattainable."[1]

A DESIRE TO LIVE JUST LIKE ANY OTHER TEENAGER IN THE WORLD

When the war broke out in 1967, my father was an electrical engineering Ph.D. student in Germany. After the war, Israel gave ID cards to Palestinians. The cards were required for them to remain in Palestine, but since my father was abroad at the time they were distributed, he wasn't able to get one. My mom, who hadn't yet met my father, was in the West Bank at the time and was able to get an ID card. A little after the war, my dad moved to Jordan. Later, he met my mother while she was traveling through Jordan to visit a relative. My parents were married in November 1977, and then they started working immediately to return to Palestine. At first they thought that since my dad was marrying someone with an ID card, it would be easier for him to apply for one as well. But the Israeli government said that they needed to have a child to prove that the marriage was real. They got pregnant really quickly—and I was born nine months later, in Amman, Jordan, in October 1978.[2]

After I was born, my parents continued their pursuit of an ID card for my father. This time, the Israeli authorities told my mom that she needed to have a boy, because a girl didn't count. Who knows what their reasoning was. My mom had to make the choice to get pregnant as soon as possible again, so that she could try to have a boy and reapply for an ID for my father.

An opportunity came up for my father to help build a new university out of a technical college that was located in Abu Dis.[3] So we moved to Palestine in 1979, even though we didn't have an ID for my father yet. We didn't stay long. The faculty named the new university Al-Quds.[4] *Al-Quds* is the Arabic name for the city of Jerusalem, and the name drew a lot of attention from the Israeli authorities, who assumed the founders were implying that the city belonged to the Palestinians. Some professors were arrested, and my dad was sent back to Jordan.

The next year, my mother was pregnant with my brother Muhanned, and we tried again to live in the West Bank. My father had found teaching work. This time, we settled near Ramallah.[5] Finally, my father was able to obtain

an ID card not long after my brother was born. Then after he got his ID card, he helped found the engineering school at Birzeit University.[6] My mother was a teacher, and later a principal, but she took some time off after the birth of Muhanned and later my sister Duna.

I grew up in a politically active family. I also grew up with parents who thought that their children had to leave a mark on society. We were raised to think that we *had* to live with a sense of purpose. And the main purpose, the underlying goal, was always to serve Palestine in one way or another.

I was sheltered from some of the problems many Palestinians have, but I can't say I grew up completely sheltered, because I was educated about the Israeli occupation. You know, I grew up during the beginning of the First Intifada, so the entire atmosphere was different.[7] Everyone, from teenagers to adults, was more aware of Palestine, of the political situation, of the prisoners and arrests.[8] Demonstrations took place right outside our home, since we lived in a central area of Al-Bireh, just outside Ramallah.[9] One of my earliest clear memories is from the start of the Intifada. I was eight years old, and I spoke to a BBC reporter. I told him, "We're not just throwing rocks, we want our freedom!"

The demonstrations during the First Intifada brought the neighborhood together. At that time, women would knit navy-blue V-neck shirts that they could send to prisoners. So that's how I learned knitting. The prison would only accept that color, and it had to be V-neck, and it had to be plain—we couldn't even use any stitches but the most basic ones. And my mom was part of a women's group that would go into refugee camps to visit prisoners' families, and they would also collect these knitted shirts and send them to prisons.

I don't remember much about my first couple of years at school. Actually, the Israeli military shut down most schools in the area during the First Intifada. Schools might operate for only a few hours a week. So we did distance learning. I was enrolled at the Friends School, and I'd go once every two weeks to drop off my assignments and pick up new ones.[10] The first day of the year, we'd go to pick up our books, get our first assignments, and then immediately go home to start working on them. We were really responsible for our own education. Kids from all around would

come to our home, and my mother would teach them. Finally, when I was around twelve, the school reopened. But even then it was only open for half days.

Around the time I became a teenager, the Intifada took on a different emotional quality for me. I wasn't just knitting sweaters anymore—I was watching my friends get arrested. I remember the powerful desire to live just like any other teenager around the world, to spend my time listening to music and not having to care about politics. It was suffocating. I say this with a lot of humility, because I didn't even see what it was like to live in a refugee camp. So if *I* was suffocating in the middle of a city, with a home that had all the amenities that anyone could ask for, I can't imagine what it was like for anyone in the refugee camps.

And then I saw this complete switch, with Oslo, around 1993.[11] Things started to open up more. We could get to places we couldn't get to before, including Jerusalem, and Haifa, and Jaffa.[12] By the time I graduated from high school in '96, even the topics of conversation with my friends were completely different—more the day-to-day concerns with living and work. We didn't need to talk about fighting just to live and struggling just to exist. I could think about things like the New Kids on the Block, pop music. But even as a teen, I never trusted the Oslo Accords. We had peace, but it felt like an illusion, a hologram.

I WAS *IN LOVE* WITH THE CONCEPT OF A ROAD TRIP

I lived in Ramallah until I was seventeen. Then I graduated from the Friends School, and I received a full-tuition scholarship to Earlham College in the States.[13] The Friends School had an arrangement where they'd send one or two graduating students to Earlham on full scholarship every year. I'd applied to a few other liberal arts colleges in the States, but I really wanted to get into Earlham, and when I got the scholarship, my family discussed it. It was a little bit of a conflict. It was very tough for my dad, particularly. My mother is a very realistic woman, and she felt like her children leaving home was inevitable. But I think for my father it was harder. He viewed the United States as a country that helped Israel. It was a

matter of principle that his daughter shouldn't leave this country to study in the U.S. Coming to terms with that was a huge adjustment.

In the end, we decided that I'd go with the idea to become a physician, and that I would return to Palestine after my education. My parents announced, "We'll allow you, our first daughter, to go to the United States on your own, only under the following terms—you will *not* return with a bachelor's in biology or chemistry, because you could always do that at Birzeit, and you will try to get into medical school." I would finish my education, and then I would come back and work here in Palestine.

All I knew about Earlham was that it was a small school, that I wouldn't have more than thirty or forty students in my classes, which was true. Except for introductory classes, I think most of my classes were like that. I think at seventeen you don't know what to expect out of college, and I soon learned that the school was extremely challenging. I worked really hard. But the social life was far better than I expected. The kindness of people on campus made me feel really cared for in a small setting. And Earlham was very pro-Palestinian. As a Quaker institution, they were very interested in educating Palestinians—they'd been accepting Palestinian students since 1948.

I took biology in the first year, under the assumption that I'd be a pre-med student. But I was broken by the anatomy and physiology course. I just couldn't do it—the smell, the formaldehyde. I worked so hard, and I could barely break a C in the course.

And in the meantime, I was taking organic chemistry, and I was practically sleeping through the course and I was getting an A, you know? And that's when things kind of shifted. I had a great organic chemistry professor, Thomas Ruttledge, who's still my friend and colleague, and I decided to become a chemist. And I thought, "Well, I'll get a Ph.D. instead of an M.D." And I wanted to work in the pharmaceutical industry. That part really enticed me—the idea of *creating* things.

By the end of my undergrad experience, I felt very much at home at Earlham, and I do think those were the best four years of my entire time in the United States. You know, the one thing that fascinated me the most living in the United States was the ability to *drive anywhere.* I was *in love* with the concept of a road trip. I learned driving just to be able to drive out for endless hours, because it was mind-boggling to me that I could cross

state lines and be in Tennessee for a couple of hours, and on the same day drive back to Indiana, no problem! That was new to me, and I loved traveling, even after starting my Ph.D. program.

I did my Ph.D. in medicinal organic chemistry at the University of Tennessee, and I focused on computer-based drug design and discovery. I learned to design compounds by modeling enzymes on a computer, which was a very cutting edge approach to medicinal chemistry at the time. I worked with a team that researched anti-HIV compounds and anti-cancer agents.

I briefly considered staying in the U.S. When you're in graduate school and doing research, all you see as important is the science that you're doing. And you don't have a concept or understanding of what life really is, right? Because for a scientist, life exists within the walls of the lab, and the library, and on your computer. And so for a while I really thought that I should stay for a post-doc there. But my parents weren't willing to live through another year of not having their children around. They were really adamant that we should all finish and return as soon as we were done.

Also, I started my Ph.D. program at Tennessee right before September 11, 2001. I remember the day of the attacks, I had to teach a class. As I walked into the classroom, I heard some students whispering about me, "She's Palestinian, they're responsible for this." I couldn't keep silent. I told the whole class that it couldn't have been the Palestinians, and that there was no way I would condone such an act. I told them I came from a violent place, but that all I wanted was for things to be easier for my younger brother and sister. I ended up crying, and a colleague came to the classroom and took over the class for me.

Later I experienced real hostility, even from some faculty, who'd ask me questions like, "Why are Muslims like this?" I knew then I couldn't stay in the U.S. I couldn't go through life explaining myself to others. It sounds strange, but I thought then that if I had children, I'd rather they grow up with the problems of occupation and know who they were than to keep having to explain themselves and their identities to everyone else in their community.

There is a lot that I still love about the U.S. and the South—I still make sweet potato pie every November, around Thanksgiving. But since

September 11, I've known there is no way I could be happy living my entire life in the States.

So an opportunity arose in Ramallah at a pharmaceutical company called Pharmacare, and it sounded interesting enough. Also, I thought, *If I'm willing to try living in the United States and adjust to its cultural values—the way it works, its social structure, everything—then why not give this chance to Palestine itself?*

So after my Ph.D. program I returned to Palestine in January 2007, and I began researching the antioxidant activity of Palestinian plants with Pharmacare. It was part of a project where we were looking for anti-cancer compounds in traditional Palestinian medicinal plants. I worked with herbalists throughout the West Bank. We started the lab from scratch. Up until that point, all pharmaceutical companies in the West Bank were generic drug producers. Our work was the first to invest in innovative research in the region.

THERE'S A RHYTHM IN PALESTINE THAT REALLY GETS UNDER YOUR SKIN

Palestine had changed quite a lot since I had left. I had been away for the entire Second Intifada. I had never seen the wall.[14] That was my first impression of what had changed. I had seen pictures, but to see it cut through terrain I remembered well—honestly, to this day I haven't resolved the feeling I had when I saw it. Passing into the West Bank through Qalandiya, I saw incredible poverty—Qalandiya looks like all the misery of the West Bank, including overcrowding.[15] Then driving into Ramallah, I was amazed to see how things had grown. There were new tall buildings, signs that people were doing okay. The city was jazzy, sort of dressed up. Coming back home, it was as though that illusion of peace, the hologram, had shrunk to a bubble just around my hometown.

Still, being back in Ramallah was a challenge in some ways. Once you go to graduate school abroad, it's an entirely different experience living in Palestine. Believe it or not, the culture shock was easier to get over going to

Earlham from Palestine than the culture shock that I faced coming back after almost eleven years of being away.

I can't exactly pinpoint what the reasons are for the difficulty. I think one of them is that I spent eleven years on my own, in a country that's fairly free and accepts anything and everything. And I learned to think for myself, learned to accept people for what they are and who they are, and not judge them for what they think or what they look like or what they believe. And I came back to a country that's fairly systematic. There's a specific, almost rigid, structure in society here that you have to fit into.

I came back here to Palestine, and I had social obligations and family obligations, and I was no longer able to read in my free time. Even the way I dressed had to change. So it was very difficult at the beginning.

But even in those early days back, I felt like Ramallah had a way of making me feel comfortable. And it's not just the city—it's the people. There's a rhythm in Palestine. Every country has its own rhythm, but there's a rhythm in Palestine that really gets under your skin, even with all the difficulty of travel, with all the difficulty of being stuck on the road in traffic. There's something that just gets under your skin, and it's very difficult to leave, once you start to get settled in here. I also finally found old friends, and a lot of my friends were going through the same difficulties. They'd been gone for a while, they were educated outside, whether in France or England or the U.S., and had returned. So we had something in common, and a common language, and that's kind of what's got me slowly coming back into living here.

OUR FIRST CLASS

I worked for Pharmacare for over two years, until around 2010. But there were several reasons why I thought it was not the right place. I was spending my entire time in a lab with only one other person, and I realized more and more that I wanted to work with people. And what does a Ph.D. do with people, other than teach, right? When I was nineteen years old, my adviser Thomas Ruttledge told me that I would end up in teaching, and I thought he just didn't know me. He said that I had it in me.

So in 2010, I applied to Al-Quds University and Birzeit University for teaching positions. Al-Quds had recently developed a partnership with Bard College in the U.S., where Bard would establish a liberal arts degree program within Al-Quds.[16] And Bard thought I was the perfect candidate to teach for them—I was a liberal arts college graduate. I would understand the concepts and the teaching methods of liberal arts education.

Originally, it was a part-time position for a semester, so I only taught one class. After that first semester, Al-Quds and Bard immediately offered me a full-time position. They kind of took me in. They didn't care that I didn't have an extensive publication history or anything like that. It wasn't an old boys' club like Birzeit University.

I became a core faculty member and one of the founding faculty members. We had no program—only thirty students—and I remember running these internal transfer campaigns, where we encouraged students from Al-Quds University to give it a try for one semester. We basically opened it up for *everybody,* so good students and bad students were applying, and we accepted all of them just to be able to run a program. Then I started building the science program, and now we have the largest and most successful division in the entire college. I have sixty students who are hoping to complete their degree in either biology or chemistry right now. This year, at the end of June 2014, we were able to graduate our second class and my first class of chemistry majors.

I WORE A HEADPIECE THAT'S 200 YEARS OLD AND MADE OF GOLD LIRAS

In the spring of 2009, I met a man named Ahmad through a friend of mine who works with him in the municipal government. We saw each other occasionally for a year and a half, but I wouldn't say we were dating, really. I saw him once or twice, and I think we were both busy with our careers, and so it kind of just took its time.

We would send each other messages every now and then, check on each other. Then it took a more serious turn in the fall of 2010, in September. We started seeing each other among groups of friends so that we could keep it on the down-low, so no one would really catch who was dating whom.

Then in the end of December, we decided that we wanted to be together. He invited me to dinner on December 30 at his family's home. He said that after dinner he'd love to go to my parents' home—he wanted to meet them. From there, things developed really quickly. On Friday morning, New Year's Eve, he called me and he said that his older brother would like to talk to my father and that he'd like to make this official, which is the culturally correct way of doing things. And so they set a date to talk to my parents officially and ask for my hand in marriage.

The night of New Year's Eve, Ahmad surprised me by proposing in front of 360 guests at the Mövenpick Hotel New Year's Eve party.[17] So, by the next morning, the entire city knew that we were engaged.

It was right at the beginning of the second semester for me, so it was a little bit hard to think about getting married during the semester, but semesters at Al-Quds University are never properly planned, because there are strikes, and there are closures and political reasons not to go to school. So we thought about April for a wedding date, and then it didn't work with one of his brothers, whose daughter was expecting a child, and they wanted to be with her when she had the child. We decided that it would have to be pushed till June, but his mother was not willing to see that happen. She felt like she was old, and you never know what happens, and she wanted to be there for the wedding. And so we actually ended up getting married in March 2011, on a very cold, rainy day.

We had a full-on traditional Palestinian wedding. I wore a traditional dress, and I also wore a headpiece that's 200 years old and made of gold liras—*Ottoman* liras. The wedding party was huge. There were over 700 guests. I should have known that my life would be loud after that. After the big wedding, we had a smaller wedding reception for the family and close friends.

Within less than a year, I went from being single and career-oriented to a wife, a pregnant woman, then a mother of two. I had my twins on November 10, 2011. I came from a small, nuclear family where everybody's educated, and we had a very quiet breakfast every Friday morning, and suddenly I shifted from *that* into this huge, clan-like family, with a whole lot of brothers and sisters who are all married with children, whose children were having children. Life with my husband's family was

loud and lively, and I learned how to cook for forty people—while pregnant. And I found myself completely entrenched in Palestinian life in a way I hadn't been before.

I DISCOVERED THE WRITER IN ME

My husband worked as the mayor of Ramallah's right-hand man. When we married, in a way, I thought I was marrying Ramallah. My friends actually nicknamed me "Lady Ramallah," because I was everywhere, I would go to all the cultural events, always out in the city.

When I finally got to know my husband's family well, I realized that I didn't marry the city, I married Abu Shusha and Zakariyya, which were the two villages that his parents had left in 1948.[18] I suddenly found myself completely entrenched in Palestinian culture that I've only read about—the diaspora refugee culture. Now, my kids are descendants of refugees. It's been a total switch for me. And it was more eye-opening to me—there's *real* suffering in Palestine, there's *real* heartbreak. And it's a lot more than what people think it is. When I began to see these things, that's when the writing happened.

In July 2010, Bard sent me to the U.S. to do this writing workshop called "Language and Thinking," which is part of our core program for all of our students, and all faculty from all fields are encouraged to teach the course. And that's where I discovered the writer in me. At the Bard workshop, I discovered how much I love human beings and that I like to learn from them. That is when I started to write in earnest. Before long I had started a blog about Palestine called *The Big Olive.*

I started it with a woman I met at a wedding named Tala. I met Tala exactly two weeks before I went to that writing workshop, so all these things started to come together at the same time. Initially, the blog was supposed to be about Ramallah and about my return to the city, and how the city helped me really adjust. But it became more about growing close to this big Palestinian family of my husband's as well.

Another reason I felt I needed to write about the real Palestine was that I was traveling a lot through the West Bank doing school recruitment. I spent a lot of time traveling to the Abu Dis campus near Jerusalem, visiting

Bethlehem, going from checkpoint to checkpoint. The blog became a place where I could examine what it was like to live in this growing, cosmopolitan city—Ramallah—and then going out and observing a culture that you don't see within the city.

Back when I was living in the U.S., I used to get asked about life in Palestine quite a lot by my friends there. I would tell them to imagine that you are commuting from New York City to a small town in New Jersey, which should be an hour drive. But in order to get there, you can't take the regular highway, you have to take all these back roads. And even the back roads aren't all open, and at any point in time, any of the state police might stop you and ask you questions for an hour or more without giving any reason. Suddenly most of your day, most of your work, has been commuting home. It's exhausting. That's what living in Palestine is like, and that's what I wanted to capture in my blog.

I'd always tell my American friends, "You take your freedom to move too much for granted." I remember being stuck in traffic going to JFK after my workshop with Bard in 2010. I was trying to get to the airport to go back to Palestine, and I was really getting antsy. I was with my friend, and I said something like, "Oh my God, I'm going to miss my plane, and I can't understand this traffic." And my friend looked at me and said, "What do you *mean* you can't understand this traffic? You're the one who lives it *every day* in Palestine." But that's the thing—we take gridlock for granted in Palestine. It's possible to be surprised by terrible traffic in the United States. And so I think that's the difference between traveling here and there.

As Palestinians, we can't take any of our day-to-day plans for granted. I may plan to start my class at eleven o'clock, and on any day I could easily be fifteen minutes late, an hour late, no matter how early I left—for no reason other than a random pop-up checkpoint somewhere between home and school. There may not even be a tense situation or security reason for the pop-up checkpoint. It could be just because.

The stress of getting to work and then back home rules our lives. And now that I have children, I feel it's even further compounded. I *have* to get to daycare to get my children, and to bring them home so that I can have an hour with them during the day, so then I can put them to bed on time. And that's such a basic human want. That's something that working mothers all over the world have to worry about. But I have to worry about it several

times over. Every day I have to figure out how I might improvise if I can't get to daycare to pick up my children on time.

This stress makes you age faster, I think. In certain areas of Palestine, you can cut the tension and serve it up on a platter. And it's because people are not able to be regular human beings, because they're completely controlled by these random obstacles that will stop life from happening.

When I was pregnant, I constantly feared that my water would break in Qalandiya and I'd be stuck. I had twins who were breech sideways, and so there was no room for them to come out. I couldn't have natural birth. I knew that. And so, the last time I drove, I was about a week from giving birth. I went as far as making arrangements with a doctor in Bethlehem so that, should my water break, it would be easier to go to Bethlehem and give birth there than drive the few miles to my hospital. So I had a friend, and he agreed that he would have an ambulance on standby in Bethlehem that would come and pick me up at the drop of a hat and would take me right away to the French women's hospital in Bethlehem. He would also make sure that he was in contact with my OB/GYN, who could explain to him on the phone the details of my pregnancy. That's an extreme example, but the truth is that every time I leave the house, I have to have contingency plans. I never know how long it might take to run simple errands.

If you're in much of the U.S., you're pregnant with twins, and you work a few miles away from home and the hospital, you can get to any hospital at any time, no matter when your water breaks, no matter if your twins are breech, or both pointing downward with their heads and ready to be delivered naturally. You have that access. Here, you don't.

The only access from one city to the other is roads, and when those roads are blocked, then life stops. And that's how women end up giving birth at checkpoints. I wrote about giving birth at a checkpoint on my blog, and I was writing about my own fears. It was something that kept coming at me. And even when I was driving, I kept thinking, "What if I get stuck in this crazy traffic, and someone hits me, rear-ends me, and then I lose one of the babies because of the shock?"

For anyone who doesn't know the road Wadi Nar—actually, it's a little better now that the roads are a little bigger—but it's this winding, uphill road between Ramallah and the cities southeast of Jerusalem where trucks of all kinds and sizes and cars of all kinds and sizes are traveling two ways.

There are no clear two lanes, and literally, when you are going up, if you look to your right, you're practically on the edge of a cliff. If your car gets hit, there's nowhere to go except down the valley.

I tell my friends that it's only by the grace of God that I make it from sunrise to sunset every day, and I go to Abu Dis, and I still have the energy to take care of two kids every day. The only way for me to deal with this stress is to write. I've gotten such positive responses to the blog from everyone who reads it, but I'm not sure if I'm actually a good writer, or if people just want to be nice to me. And this is where one of my fears exists. It's not a fear, it's maybe that I'm not willing to believe that I'm good at something else other than science.

On the other hand, I found this open-armed place with this community where anything you write is up for discussion, and it's up for editing and up for improvement, and people are willing to read what you write. Because every time you write, you're putting yourself on that paper. And I'm always submitting pieces to an online magazine called *This Week in Palestine*, or just putting work up on the blog, and thinking, *Dear God, please have mercy on me. There's a piece of me within those words. So don't let them batter it because it would break my heart.* And so I'm in between, as a writer, I'm still searching for the voice. I don't know what narrative I'm going to take, I don't know what I am trying, I don't even know what story I'm telling.

So I'm still trying to find my voice. I'm not ready to give up science completely and just do writing. And at the same time, I can't just let the science take over, because I'm so extremely happy to finally have that part of me alive again.

THERE IS REAL SUFFERING OUTSIDE OF RAMALLAH

When the Bard program at Al-Quds was just getting started, we didn't have enough students to fill the classes. Besides teaching, I worked as a recruiter and traveled all around the West Bank to meet students. I traveled a lot in Bethlehem and recruited a lot of students from the refugee camps there. I also recruited quite a lot from around Hebron. Those trips were so valuable to me, because they reminded me that there is real suffering outside of

Ramallah, beyond the day-to-day obstacles of checkpoints and uncertainty that I faced in moving around the West Bank.

I've seen that suffering touch my students. We recruited quite a lot from the refugee camps, and so I taught many of the young people I was recruiting. I remember one student took an intro organic chemistry class with me—I always had to tell him to be quiet so I could get on with the lecture, because he was always asking questions. He was funny, sweet, handsome. One of the leaders in the program. Then in the middle of summer break, he disappeared for two weeks. His parents had no idea where he was—they just found his car abandoned in the street one day. He'd been arrested. And then when he returned to school in the fall, he was a completely changed person. He didn't say a single word all fall semester.

But I think the liberal arts approach here is valuable. The students really take to it—they flourish. We have students reading Greek philosophy, drama. And writing as well. I remember one assignment where students read the "to be or not to be" soliloquy from Hamlet and recast it from a Palestinian perspective. The students shared their work in class, and the results were chilling and powerful.

I hope my students will have an easier time than my generation has had. I hope they make the Palestinian cause the way they see it and not simply follow leaders whose ideas have expired. And I hope they stay alive. For my children, I hope they find liberation through education, and I hope that they choose the pen and the book before anything else. For myself, I want to continue to write, though my hopes for Palestine feel more and more crushed. I hope to never forget for a moment that whatever peace and prosperity I have in Ramallah is temporary—an illusion.

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[1] For more of Riyam's writing, see Appendix VI, page 341.

[2] Amman, the capital of Jordan, is a city of over 2 million residents.

[3] Abu Dis is a city of around 12,000 people just east of Jerusalem and the location of one of Al-Quds University's campuses.

[4] Al-Quds is a university system with three campuses—one in Jerusalem, one in Abu Dis just outside of Jerusalem, and one in Al-Bireh, adjacent to Ramallah. The system currently serves over 13,000

undergraduates.

[5] Ramallah is a city of over 30,000 people. It has experienced rapid growth since it was adopted as a de facto administrative capital by the Palestinian Authority following the Oslo Accords. Numerous nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and diplomatic outreach offices are also based in the city. Ramallah is located about ten miles northeast of Jerusalem, the city many Palestinians consider Palestine's true capital.

[6] Birzeit University is a renowned public university located just outside Ramallah. It hosts approximately 8,500 undergraduates.

[7] The First Intifada was an uprising throughout the West Bank and Gaza against Israeli military occupation. It began in December 1987 and lasted until 1993. *Intifada* in Arabic means "to shake off." For more information, see Appendix I, page 295.

[8] Israel carried out the mass arrest of Palestinian citizens during the First Intifada. More than 120,000 Palestinians were arrested or spent time in prison from 1987 to the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993.

[9] Al-Bireh is a city of over 40,000 people just east of Ramallah.

[10] The Friends School of Ramallah is a Quaker-run institution that was opened in 1889, during the time of Ottoman rule.

[11] The first Oslo Accords negotiations took place in Norway, the U.S., and France during the summer of 1993. The Accords outlined a plan for the Israeli military to withdraw from Gaza and the West Bank in stages while further negotiations would be carried out regarding Palestinian statehood, security, borders, and Israeli settlements. For more information, see Appendix I, page 295.

[12] Access to Jerusalem was significantly restricted to Palestinians from the West Bank before the Oslo Accords in 1993. Haifa is a city of 270,000 people in northern Israel. Jaffa, now part of Tel Aviv in Israel, was home to many Arabs before 1948.

[13] Earlham College is a Quaker-affiliated liberal arts college in Richmond, Indiana. It has an enrollment of 1,210 students and has regularly accepted a large cohort of Palestinian students since the signing of the Oslo Accords.

[14] Though a small portion of the barrier wall in the West Bank was constructed as early as 1994, construction of the wall increased rapidly in 2002.

[15] Qalandiya is a refugee camp and city of nearly 30,000 located between Jerusalem and Ramallah. It's also the name of the nearby checkpoint, one of the biggest in the West Bank.

[16] Bard College is a liberal arts college in Dutchess County, New York, on the Hudson River. It serves just over 2,000 undergraduate students. Bard formed an alliance with Al-Quds University in 2009, with the idea of bringing training in liberal arts education to Palestine.

[17] The Mövenpick Hotel in Ramallah is part of a Swiss chain of international luxury hotels. The hotel in Ramallah was opened in the fall of 2010.

[18] Abu Shusha was a Palestinian village of under 1,000 near the city of Ramla that was destroyed in the war of 1948. Zakariyya was a Palestinian village of just over 1,000 northwest of Hebron that was destroyed in the war of 1948.

ELI SETTLEMENT, WEST BANK

AMIAD COHEN

Executive of the Eli settlement, 32
Born in Kfar Etzion, West Bank
Interviewed in Eli, West Bank

We first meet Amiad Cohen in 2012 while on a United Nations–sponsored tour of freshwater springs in the West Bank. Much of the West Bank outside the valley of the Jordan River is arid, and the struggle for control over water resources is a major flashpoint in the tensions between Palestinians and Israeli settlers. At Ein Al-Arik, which is located halfway between the West Bank cities of Ramallah and Nablus, the springs have been developed into natural bathing pools and a park by the nearby Eli settlement.[1]

As part of a group of journalists and NGO workers, we walk among olive trees on a sloping, rocky hillside while our guide tells us of the Palestinian villages cut off from the spring by its recent development by the settlement into a park. Soon an Israeli security truck pulls up, and Amiad and one of his students get out to see what's going on. Before long, Amiad and the head of a local Palestinian village are engaged in heated argument —the Palestinian man claims the lands where the springs reside belong to his family. After things calm down, we approach Amiad and explain our work.

Later we meet Amiad in his office in Eli, a settlement laid out over eight hilltops twenty minutes north of Ramallah. He has brown eyes, a three-day beard, and his hairline appears to be receding towards his yarmulke. His desk is strewn with papers, binders, large rings of keys. "Someone told me a messy desk means a messy mind," he says. "So what does an empty desk mean?" His office is modest, without much more than a computer and some

security monitoring equipment. He's not there very often. His real office is his truck, which he drives from neighborhood to neighborhood in the settlement.

Amiad takes us on a tour of Eli in his truck, showing us mountain views, soldier memorials, and Bnei David—a pre-army school that Eli is known for. He also invites us to his home, a trailer he shares with his wife and two young children. The floor of his small living room is strewn with plastic toys, and one wall of the room is packed with books.

When we check on Amiad at Eli two years later, he's been promoted from head of security to a position he describes as CEO of Eli. Essentially, he says, he oversees the day-to-day operations of Eli, from the water and sewage systems to the building of new community projects. Still, he says, he only spends an hour a day in his office.

"WE'RE ZIONISTS, WE'RE GOING TO ISRAEL"

I was born on a kibbutz in Kfar Etzion, south of Jerusalem in the West Bank, in 1982.[2] I have five siblings—two younger brothers and three older sisters. I'm the oldest boy. The kibbutz where I grew up was part of the only Jewish settlement that was demolished in the '48 war. The Jordanians and other Arabs conquered it in '48 and killed almost everyone. Then in 1967, a man who had been a child there and one of the few survivors of the '48 war came back and established a new settlement.[3]

My mother grew up in a very blue-collar family in Batya near Tel Aviv, and my father grew up in Be'er Sheva.[4] All my family is originally from New York City and Long Island. My grandfather, my father's father, fought for the U.S. in World War II. He married my grandmother in 1950 and told her, "We're Zionists, we're going to Israel."[5] First they moved to Batya. But my grandfather wanted to go into the army and build settlements, so that's what he did.

I was born in Kfar Etzion, but when I was three and a half, my family moved to South Africa—to Johannesburg. We lived there in the apartheid days, and we had five helpers living in the house. I was a good student, a good kid. But I couldn't go out of the house often because of security

problems.[6] We could be kidnapped or killed. So I went to school on a bus with an armed guard, and then I'd head straight home after school. To visit friends in another neighborhood, we had to make an appointment two weeks ahead for an armed escort. It was crazy.

We returned to the settlements in 1989, when I was seven. This time we moved to Efrat.[7] But we had a nice home, a big home with a pool. My father is very intelligent, and he got into the computer business sometime in the early nineties, right around the time the Internet became popular. I learned about computers early. As a thirteen-year-old, I wrote HTML—and that was when it had just been invented. I also taught computers to adults. I taught Excel, PowerPoint, and Word when I was a teenager.

I left school a year before graduating from high school, in eleventh grade, because I was bored. I felt like I was wasting my best years and I thought, *What am I doing now?* I have a problem with not doing anything. I like to be busy. So I dropped out. I volunteered for a year, teaching and working with children. Then I came to Bnei David, the pre-army academy here in Eli, studied here for a year, and then I joined the army.

ELI IS STILL NOT LEGALLY RECOGNIZED BY ISRAEL

The settlement I came to for school, Eli, was established in 1986. Eli comprises eight separate hills. We're on top of a hill in the original part of the settlement that was established by twenty, thirty families.

Plans were made to settle the area in the late sixties, after the '67 war, and settlers started coming here in '76, something like that. Originally, the Israeli government planned a city of 100,000 people, and the first residents came from Shilo, just south of here.[8] Building Eli was all part of the dream of many of us settlers to bring as many Jews as possible to this part of the West Bank—a million Jews to the West Bank. In the 1980s, the government of Israel tried to encourage people to move to this region by paying for homes, roads, everything.[9] And then in the mid-nineties the government stopped promoting settlement.[10] So Eli didn't grow as fast as its planners had originally hoped.

Bnei David was established in 1989 by a rabbi who wanted to make a new kind of school that would be a pre-army yeshiva.[11] The goal was that students would study the Torah to build themselves into better soldiers, better civilians, better people.

Bnei David was the first school like that. And now it's a revolution in the Zionist community. There are twenty pre-army schools that are religious like the one here in Eli, and there are twenty secular pre-army academies. I teach here at Bnei David, and I teach in Tel Aviv in a secular one. And it started here in Eli. Most of the population of Eli today graduated from this yeshiva, and now we have high-ranking officers in the army who live here. Generals, major generals live here—ten, fifteen generals in a small town of almost 4,000 people, because of Bnei David.

But the problem we have in Eli is that the town is still not legally recognized yet by Israel. Or I should say, Eli was recognized by the state of Israel, but they didn't finish the process. They encouraged the settlement back in the eighties but haven't officially recognized the settlement following the agreements in the mid-nineties. The secretary of defense needs to sign an order to recognize us, but most of the secretaries of defense in the past twenty-five years have been too far left politically to acknowledge settlements like Eli.[12] That's one problem. The second problem—we live in a place that is in between two administrative areas. There are Areas A and B, which are supposed to be governed by the Palestinians, and Area C, which is for Israel and the settlers.[13] We're exactly in between. That means that land ownership and enforcement of the law in this area are very unsettled. That's an understatement. For the Arabs around here, there's no bookkeeping about who owns what land, and so a lot of Arabs make claims on land as personal property without having any written records. No one knows the facts. We can't prove anything about land ownership, and they can't prove anything, so it's a problem.[14]

WHEN IT'S WAR, IT'S WAR. WHEN YOU'RE MORAL, YOU'RE MORAL.

After graduating from Bnei David, I joined the army. In 2001, when I started, the mandatory conscription was for three years.[15] I was in the Golani Brigade.[16] And in Golani they have special units, and I was in a special unit whose expertise is demolition. I worked with explosives—RDX-10, C-4.[17] Our job was to demolish Palestinian bunkers and weapons caches throughout the Gaza Strip, in the West Bank, in Lebanon. Our unit could do crazy stuff with explosives. We could go into a building and blow up only one room without hurting the building, for instance. There were situations where we might find Palestinian explosives in a room and need to detonate them, but we didn't want to destroy the whole building. We'd have to make a hole in the wall and set up our explosives a certain way so the explosion was directed out of the building. It was very difficult. Sometimes it didn't go as planned, and the whole building would crash down. We tried to do our best so that nobody was hurt or killed.

The most difficult period of my service was fighting in the Gaza Strip in 2004 through 2005.[18] It was very extreme, very frightening there. Plenty of friends were injured, plenty of my fellow soldiers. In Gaza we were fighting mostly Hamas. But we couldn't always distinguish who was Hamas and who was not, and my soldiers and I had plenty of talks about how to be moral about war. Questions that you don't hear plenty of people ask. When it's war, it's war. When you're moral, you're moral. The two don't always go together. But we tried to ask the questions, *How do you do it? How do you act morally in this situation? If a child gets caught up in our operations, what would we do?*

And it was dangerous, too. I was shot at by Palestinians when I was a soldier. I was in a civilian car hitchhiking to my base, and two Palestinians ambushed us and shot at our car. I stopped the driver, and I ran after the two gunmen. We ended up capturing them, and they were sent to prison.

When you join with a military force, you divide the world into the good guys and the bad guys. I've been there. That's how you educate soldiers. A soldier needs to know that he's good and the enemy's bad. If he thinks that he's maybe a little bad and the enemy's maybe a little good, then he's not a good soldier. That's the army world. But now I live in the civil world, a much more complicated world.

I’M MARRIED TO MY WIFE AND MY M-16

After the war, I came back to Eli and started teaching at Bnei David. Then I met my wife through a friend in 2007, and I knew right away I wanted to marry her. When my students ask me how you choose your wife, I tell them, “First of all, you need to have chemistry. And then you have to have the same ideas about what you want in life. Then you need to earn her—not *win* her—you need to change to be better to earn her.”

When we met, my wife worked with handicapped adults. And when I saw how she treated them, I knew she was a good person, that she had a big heart. And I wanted a big-hearted wife. I told her, “You’ll be my wife, now you just need to decide that I’ll be your husband.” And it happened. We were engaged half a year after we met and married in eight months. Our first child was born in 2009 and the second in 2011. Around the time my wife was pregnant with our second child I also started working as head of security in Eli.

I drive my truck a lot on the job. I have a knife, a Motorola, and my M-16. I’m married to my wife and my M-16. It goes everywhere I go.

As head of security of Eli, I haven’t had to shoot my rifle. And I don’t want to. I know when to hide it and when to show it. The people of Eli all own a lot of weapons, mostly pistols. It’s common. It’s for their own security. Here people don’t just feel threatened, they *are* threatened. But many settlers don’t know how to use their guns, which is dangerous.

There are areas where it’s much more dangerous, and areas where there’s less danger. Now, it’s quiet. From 2001 till 2005, shootings in the roads in this part of the West Bank were common.[19] But in the past three years that I’ve had my job, there have been three shootings in the roads here. Still, we’re surrounded by neighboring Palestinian villages, and each one has about 5,000 people. So we’re surrounded by 12,000 or 15,000 Palestinians, and there’s less than 4,000 of us here in Eli.

When I have security situations, I’m very stressed. But I run and I swim. That’s how I calm down. We live a regular life here in Eli, but we always carry something inside—fear. Because every night when I get a telephone call from my subordinates saying the radar system we use sees something weird, I jump. Because I can’t stand the sight of a murdered

family. I'm afraid that my wife and kids will get hit by stones. It happens every day. And the Molotov cocktails thrown at cars—that happens once a week, every two weeks.

In the summer of 2010, I got a call that there was a fire just east of Eli. So I got my deputy and a couple of other guys, we called the army for security, and we went to put out the fire. Palestinians from the village just east of here, Karyut, they had burned out one of my security cameras on the edge of Eli's jurisdiction.[20] I knew it was set on purpose, because it was started with a burning tire. Setting fire to tires and putting them by something else is a good way to burn something down, and something I've seen villagers do it before. The wind was from west to east, the fire spread to an olive grove, and olive trees were burning. I had the phone number of the head of security of Karyut, and I speak a bit of Arabic. So I called him, and I told him there was a fire burning down Palestinian olive trees.

I decided to extinguish the fire in the olive grove myself. I don't like olive trees burning. We believe that the trees have a place in the world, that they're important.

So the head of security in Karyut came, and he brought cameramen. I came with fire-extinguishing equipment, and he brought photographers. While we extinguished the fire in the olive grove, they photographed us. I took pictures of them taking pictures of me. It was crazy. He told me, "I'm taking pictures to show how you're burning down our trees!" I put out the fire anyway, despite the Palestinians' accusations against me, because it was the right thing to do.

What I feel isn't anger. It's frustration. Yes, we all know there is a conflict. I'm not trying to hide the conflict. But there is a way to solve the conflict—that's through negotiation. You want to come and negotiate, come. You don't, pay the price.

TO ME, "SETTLER" IS A GOOD WORD

We stay here despite the threat because of ideology. Zionist slash Jewish slash God—different sides of the same thing. They kicked us out of Europe—thank you very much for kicking us out of Europe. We don't care who wants us and who doesn't. We decided, *We're here and you don't play*

around with people like us. We're here, and we're able to fight to stay here. Last night I had a conflict with a Palestinian. And he told me, "Now you're strong, so you can kill us. But when we are strong, we'll kill you." I said, "Yeah, okay, so when you think you're strong enough, call me." That's an answer for people who only understand power.

I feel powerful now. In the larger world, "settler" is not a good word when talking about the West Bank. But to me, the word "settler" is a very good word. I see a settler as a person who is trying to live with the land, to combine people and the land together in a positive way. We're trying to build, to grow here in Eli. We want to bring as many people as we can here. Plenty of the wives here work only part-time jobs, because the main goal is building a new generation. Now my wife is a social worker, working with kids, broken families, divorced parents, parents in prison. But it's only a part-time job. We want to grow our family.

I don't hate Arabs. I don't want to kill them, I don't want them dead. I'm not against them. The Jewish nation's place is here. I don't want a conflict with you. You can live here. You're invited. Meanwhile, there is a Palestinian state—in Jordan. We need to put everything in place. I don't want Egypt, I don't want Syria, I don't want to conquer Europe. We want our place. Mine. This small border, this is mine. Give me my place. I don't want your place.

I'M VERY OPTIMISTIC ABOUT LIFE

I hope that my kids will be much better than I am. I don't believe that I'm so good, but I pray that my kids will be much better. Because the world is going forward. It's not going backwards. It's getting better and better every day. And I'm very optimistic about the future.

Today, I know how to control myself and my anger. I've worked on it the last few years by studying the Torah. Now I think of how to choose every minute of my life. I have responsibility for my feelings. I choose my feelings, I know how to control them. Because everything you feel, everything you do, you choose.

There is a national conflict, and I believe that is a moral conflict. I need to ask myself in what ways we are we acting immorally towards the

Palestinians and try to fix that. And I know what apartheid is in South Africa—I lived there. The basics are very different. The English, French, and Dutch came to South Africa as conquerors, as imperialists, and conquered Africa—that's very different from what's happening here. To say that we are treating Palestinians like the South Africans—it's wrong, it's not happening here.

I don't believe that, as a whole, Arabs in Israel want to push all Jews into the sea. It's much more complicated than that. Whoever holds Islamic ideology definitely wants to kill all the Jews. They say it, loudly. You just have to listen. Read their books, their newspapers. Whoever embraces the Palestinian national identity, they want to kill us in a war. They say it. When they draw the map, they don't draw the '67 borders, they claim all of Israel.[21] They want everything.

I do not think that everything Israel does is moral. We are not as good as we want to be. My explanation for our problems is that we don't know yet who we are and what our goals are. We have problems with human rights with the Palestinians. And the extreme left wing wants to keep these problems, actually, so they can show we are not moral people, and the Jews are not what they claim to be. So I try to fight that perception.

To build our identity as Jews in Israel, who we are, we have to start by asking questions. And we have to have problems to force us to ask questions. So, thank God we have the Palestinians. Thank God we have that problem, so we can ask ourselves who we are. It's more than useful. It's an integral part of who we are.

What is immoral about settlement buildings? The world expects the Jews to be more moral than others. When I educate, I explain that criticism comes out of a belief. When you criticize something or someone, you believe they can change. If you don't care about someone, you don't criticize them. The world is looking up to the Jewish nation and the Jewish community and the Jewish country because they believe there is something different here.

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[1] Today, Eli is a cooperatively-run settlement of nearly 3,500 people about thirty miles north of Jerusalem.

[2] Kfar Etzion is a settlement of under 1,000 people located four miles south of Jerusalem. A *kibbutz* (Israeli collective farming community) was built on the current location in 1927.

[3] The kibbutz at Kfar Etzion was completely destroyed after a two-day battle during the Arab-Israeli War in 1948. The destruction of the village by Arab forces (in retaliation for the destruction of an Arab village), is memorialized throughout Israel. After the 1967 Six-Day War, a newly established Kfar Etzion was one of the first planned Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank. The new community was led by Hanan Porat (1943–2011), a prominent settlement activist who, as a child, was one of four survivors of the original Kfar Etzion's destruction.

[4] Mazkeret Batya is a city of 10,000 located sixteen miles south of Tel Aviv. Be'er Sheva is a city of over 200,000 people located sixty miles southwest of Jerusalem.

[5] Zionism is the movement to create a Jewish homeland that led to the formation of Israel in 1948. For more information, see Appendix I, page 295.

[6] During the late eighties, opposition to South Africa's apartheid policies intensified and resulted in widespread violence and a national state of emergency.

[7] Efrat is a settlement with 10,000 residents that was established in 1983. It is located three miles east of Kfar Etzion.

[8] Shilo is a settlement a few miles east of Eli. Shilo was established in 1978 and has a population of nearly 2,500. It was one of the first settlements constructed by the Gush Eminum movement, which sought to claim all of Judea and Samaria (the West Bank) for Israel. For more on Gush Eminum, see the Glossary, page 304.

[9] The number of Israeli settlers in the West Bank quadrupled between 1980 and 1983, from 8,000 to approximately 32,000. Expanded construction of settlements in the West Bank and Gaza was promoted by the government of Prime Minister Menachem Begin following the Camp David Accords and the peace agreements with Egypt, Israel's most powerful neighbor.

[10] The first Oslo Accord was signed in 1993 and slowed the growth of settlements in the West Bank for a couple of years after implementation in 1995 (though settlement construction expanded in 1997). For more on the Oslo Accords, see Appendix I, page 295.

[11] A *yeshiva* is a Jewish religious school dedicated to the study of the Talmud and Torah.

[12] The Israeli government officially recognizes 125 settlements in the West Bank, and over 100 more have been established without formal recognition (and contravening Israeli law), but with support for infrastructure and security.

[13] For more on administrative Areas A, B, and C, see the Glossary, page 304.

[14] Parts of the land Eli Settlement is built on are categorized as Palestinian private property according to a 2013 survey conducted by the Israeli Civil Administration.

[15] Israeli citizens (with some notable exceptions) are required to serve in the military, usually starting at age eighteen. For more information on the Israeli Defense Force, see the Glossary, page 304.

[16] The Golani Brigade (also called the 1st Brigade) was responsible for major combat operations throughout the West Bank and Gaza during the Second Intifada.

[17] RDX-10 and C-4 are both explosive compounds used commonly in warfare.

[18] Fighting throughout the Gaza Strip during the Second Intifada lasted until the unilateral withdrawal of Israeli security forces and settlements between August and September of 2005.

[19] This was the period of the Second Intifada. For more information on the Intifadas, see the Glossary, page 304.

[20] Karyut is a village of less than 5,000 people located a mile east of Eli.

[21] The ’67 borders are the borders demarcated by the Armistice Agreement of 1949, otherwise known as the Green Line.

KAFR MALEK, WEST BANK

EBTIHAJ BE’ERAT

Homemaker, 52
Born in Kafr Malek, West Bank
Interviewed in Kafr Malek, West Bank

We first visit Ebtihaj Be’erat at her house in the hilltop village of Kafr Malek in 2010. Her house is easy to find: a giant banner in honor of her son, Abdal Aziz, hangs against a whitewashed wall above red geraniums. Two years before our visit, just up the road from the house, Abdal Aziz was shot and killed by Israeli soldiers. Inside the house, there is a room devoted to him, with pictures and plaques on the walls and more pictures piled on the floor.

Ebtihaj is a warm woman with oval frame glasses, a gold heart necklace, and deep dimples that appear when she smiles. Her name, in fact, means “joy.” Yet, the death of her son is clearly still part of her everyday life. As we ask her about her childhood in Kafr Malek, her experiences during the First Intifada, and her family tree, her answers circle back again and again to the loss of her son and the day he was shot. Still, evidence of her five other children also covers the walls, including photos of them dancing in a well-known dance troupe, framed university degrees, and various awards. Throughout our interview, her house is bustling with family members and neighbors coming and going. And although she downplays her skill as a host, she offers us an impressive spread of food, including homemade bread, jam, pickles, as well as local eggs and herbs.

When we come back to the house two years later, the banner honoring Abdal Aziz has been moved further up the street to the place where he died. Ebtihaj is now able to tell the story of his death without being completely

overcome with grief, and she's more willing to talk about the life that continues in his absence. Besides telling us of her son, Ebtihaj shares stories about the changes she remembers in her home village since the Six-Day War in 1967, a conflict that led to Israel's occupation of the West Bank. Though Ebtihaj and her family had the opportunity to join the hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who emigrated from the West Bank following the Six-Day War, she decided to stay in Kafr Malek and raise her children in a Palestinian community.

OUR WEDDING PARTIES ARE THE MOST BEAUTIFUL

My name is Ebtihaj, and I'm from Kafr Malek, which is a very social village where everyone knows everyone else.[1] I was born in the spring of 1962.

All my family is from the village. My grandfather and my great-grandfather were born here. The people of this village have always been known for their hospitality, and anyone who comes to Kafr Malek loves it here. It's beautiful. We receive visitors with hospitality, male or female. We're more moderate than some nearby villages. We're more civilized. We're not like the other villages where a man can't enter a woman's house when she's alone. Our wedding parties are the most beautiful in the area because all of us wear traditional dresses, even the small girls. Also, many people in our village have lived in the United States or Latin America, so they can speak English or Spanish. I don't know the exact numbers, but approximately 20 to 40 percent of the people born in this village are living abroad at the moment, mostly in the U.S., but also in Colombia and Brazil. A number of families emigrated during the First Intifada, but they come back for visits.[2]

I was the sixth of seven children. I have four sisters and two brothers. My father worked for the post office in the village. It was his job to go to Ramallah and pick up the mail, and then to deliver it to everyone in Kafr Malek. He also had a second job as a butcher in the market. When I was a young child, Kafr Malek was surrounded by farms. Many villagers had

farms on top of Al-Asur Hill behind the village, and many farmers grew grapes.

Then in 1967, Israeli soldiers invaded the village.[3] I remember fleeing with all the other villagers to a grove of almond trees. Some villagers fled to their fields. My family lived under almond trees for two weeks while the war was going on, and I remember we each had just enough food and water rations to last two weeks.

Later that year, the Israeli military moved in and built a base on top of the hill. They cleared a lot of the farms on the hill and demolished the homes of some farmers as well. We got used to seeing soldiers in the village. There weren't any Jordanian policeman anymore, just Israeli soldiers. We got used to hearing about homes being raided as well. Soldiers would take men and boys in the middle of the night, from young children to the oldest men.

I met my husband when I was very young, when I was fifteen years old and he was twenty. He fell in love with me. He's my cousin, a relative from my mother's side.[4] We were engaged that same year we met, and we married when I was seventeen. Nowadays, it doesn't happen like that. Mostly now, women wait until they finish university and then they get married. I was sad because I wanted to finish my studies. But my father told me, "No, you have to get married." I didn't even finish high school.

I moved into my in-laws' home right after our marriage in 1979. Before the war in 1967, my husband's family had farmed at the top of Al-Asur Hill. After the war, soldiers ordered his family out of their home and blew it up, so they moved to another house in the village. When I married my husband, he was still a farmer and also worked as a stone cutter.

In 1980 we had our first child, my daughter Maysa, when I was eighteen. By then I'd settled into my husband's home as a housewife. I did the housework along with my mother- and sisters-in-law, I cooked, and if any visitors came, I welcomed them. Over the next few years I had two more daughters and a son—Haifa, Rafa, and Fadi. Every day I would cook lunch for my children and for my husband. I'd buy my own groceries. And I'd tend the garden—we planted wheat and olives. During Eid, I'd make cookies, you know, *ma'amoul*.[5] Everyone would ask for them.

During this time, in the early eighties, many villagers were leaving to live abroad. I had two older brothers and an older sister get visas to work in the United States, and my brothers encouraged our family to fill out the paperwork to do the same. There was more opportunity to work there, and more freedom. In the U.S. we wouldn't have to worry about soldiers coming to our house. So we filled out the paperwork and applied, and when we didn't get a visa the first year, we kept reapplying every year. Finally, in 1986, my family was granted visas to live in the United States. But by this time, I had three daughters, and I wasn't sure I wanted to raise them in America. My sister had brought two daughters to the U.S., and they had ended up marrying foreigners. I wanted my daughters to grow up and marry Palestinians—hopefully, young men from the village. So we reconsidered it and decided to stay. My husband found work as a taxi driver in Ramallah, so he was able to support our family.

THE SOLDIERS FORBADE US TO LIGHT CANDLES

I gave birth to my middle son, Abdal Aziz, on December 5, 1987, in Ramallah, when the First Intifada had just broken out.[6] He was born nine pounds, blond, and with green eyes. The nurse who was on shift, she held him and said to everyone, "Come and see the child from Kafr Malek. He is so beautiful." I named him Abdal Aziz after his grandfather—his father's father.

When I got out of the hospital, Israeli soldiers were closing the shops because they said that the Intifada was moving from Gaza to the West Bank. I couldn't even find a pharmacy to buy vitamins or a bottle, the basic things we needed with a new baby in the house.

The soldiers imposed a curfew, and it was forbidden for anyone to be outside, even in our own yards, for over a month. We had to stay inside our houses, and we couldn't open a window to look outside. The soldiers even forbade us to light candles. If they saw the light of a candle in a house, they would come and break the windows. During this time we ate mostly bread, olive oil, and *za'atar*.[7] When we were able to find other kinds of food, my mother-in-law would have to hide it well in the house, because if soldiers

searched our home, they would know we had broken curfew if we had fresh food.

Sometimes they'd arrest someone every month or two, sometimes it seemed like every night. Checkpoints were set up, so we couldn't travel to the top of the hill anymore, where the base was, and there was only one entrance into and out of the village. Sometimes, depending on what was happening during the Intifada, they would set up a checkpoint at the main entrance of the village, and they wouldn't allow anyone to enter or leave except to go to neighboring villages. Even when someone was sick, or even if a pregnant woman was having a baby, they'd go to Taybeh, the next village, instead of to the hospital in Ramallah because when the soldiers set up the checkpoint, they wouldn't allow anyone to leave.[8]

All the men in the village had left their houses, because if the soldiers came in and saw a man in the house, they would sometimes beat him so badly. So all the men stayed in the fields, and they would go to Ramallah to look for food. During the night, they'd sneak home with food and basic supplies like sugar, and then go back to the fields.

My house is in the center of the city, so the soldiers would come often. Once, when my Abdal Aziz was two months old, I was sitting outside with him because I was cleaning the bread oven. My mother-in-law was at a neighbor's house and my husband was in the fields. A few soldiers saw me from the street, and they chased me into my house. I ran into the kitchen where the rest of my children were at the time—I was holding Abdal Aziz in my arms. The soldiers had these batons, and one soldier tried to hit me with one. I moved my head just in time to avoid the blow, and he struck the refrigerator instead. But he was aiming for my head. All my kids were screaming and crying, including Abdal Aziz in my arms. I think that made the soldiers back off. My children protected me.

Then the soldiers closed the kitchen door on me and locked me inside with my kids. They left the key on the outside of the door, and we were locked in the kitchen for around two hours until my mother-in-law came back. At that time, there weren't any mobile phones like today, not even house phones. If my mother-in-law hadn't been at the neighbor's house, she would have been with me inside, and who knows how long it would have been before someone unlocked the door. When she returned and let me out

of the kitchen, I just collapsed. I was so scared, I fainted. She didn't know what to do, and there wasn't any way to call a doctor or nurse. So she got the idea of throwing open all the windows and turning on a lamp in the window. It attracted the attention of the soldiers, and when more came to see what was going on, she begged them to get me a nurse or doctor. That was the only way she had to get me medical attention.

I believe Abdal Aziz always remembered that day. He had an image of it burned in his mind. At two months, he was too young to form memories. But the memory was like an inspiration from God, at least that's what I think.

WHAT HE FELT THROUGH THE STONE

As a child, Abdal Aziz was unique. There wasn't anyone like him. He was kind and beautiful. Abdal Aziz had a lot of friends, and he was a leader among them from a young age. Part of it was that he was just so affectionate and generous. I remember he used to come up to me when I was washing dishes or something and give me a big hug. He was the same way with his friends. If one of his friends mentioned that he saw a shirt in the market that he wanted, Abdal Aziz would save his money until he could buy the shirt for his friend. I had another child, Muhammed, in 1990, and Muhammed always looked up to Abdal Aziz.

Abdal Aziz was thirteen at the start of the Second Intifada in 2000. During the Second Intifada, the Israeli military closed the village for a month, and we couldn't leave our homes. They even cut the electricity and water for a month. When the soldiers came, we'd close everything, all the windows, and we'd stay inside. I can remember two occasions when we forgot to close a window, and teargas got inside the home. We felt like we were suffocating.

Abdal Aziz was born when the First Intifada started, so it was in his blood to be active.[9] But Abdal Aziz wasn't affiliated with any political party. He wore one bracelet that said "Fatah," another one that said "PFLP," and another one that said "Hamas," all together on one hand.[10] I used to

ask him, “Which one are you?” He’d say, “I’m Palestinian.” That’s another reason why everyone loved him.

Ever since he was a kid, he always talked about how much he wanted to throw stones at the jeeps and tanks when they passed our house, to drive them away. The kids don’t have any weapons to defend their country, they only have stones—a stone versus a tank. I knew my son loved to throw stones at soldiers when they came at night, and I knew that he was in danger. The soldiers arrested so many teenagers and they injured others. My cousin is now spending twenty-five years in jail for throwing stones, and another one was put in jail for fifteen years. One of my neighbors has been in jail for eighteen years now, just for throwing stones at the soldiers.

The soldiers usually come into the village at two or three a.m. That is their normal time. Every time they enter the village, the youth have an agreement to start whistling to let everyone know. It’s a signal for others when they are on the streets to go back home so the soldiers don’t catch them and beat them. I’m always so afraid whenever I start to hear whistling.

There were many nights when I would hear whistling, wake up, and put on my clothes to go out and search for Abdal Aziz. I would go to his friends and ask them where he was. When Abdal Aziz came home in the early morning, I’d go hug him as soon as I saw him on the stairs outside of the house and tell him, “Thank God, you’re okay and nothing has happened to you.” I would make him sit and talk to me because he wouldn’t listen. I used to tell him, “When the soldiers come, they have armor, they have weapons, and they are much stronger than us.” I asked him if throwing stones would make them leave the village. He always said, “This is our village. Why did they come to our village?” I would ask him, “Can you forbid the soldiers or the tanks from coming into the village?” I would tell him that if they killed him, I would go crazy. He would say that if a patrol came into the village and he didn’t throw a stone at it, it would hurt his conscience. He wanted to protect his country. He wanted to express what he felt through the stone, that this is our country and not theirs. I was angry with him because I knew that something bad would happen to him.

Once, I left the house and all my neighbors were asking me, “Where are you going? The patrol is near.” And I told them, “Let them shoot me. I want to go find Abdal Aziz.” He was at the neighbor’s house. I stood in the street and called to him, and I told him, “If you don’t come to the house now, I

will go to the patrol and make them shoot me." If they saw anyone at night in the village, there was a chance they would shoot. It didn't matter whether it was a woman or a man. He told me, "I'm coming, I'm coming," and he came back with me. We snuck home safely. He came back with me, but when I went to sleep, he snuck out again.

WHY DO YOU THINK EVERYONE WANTS PALESTINE?

It was difficult living in Kafr Malek during the Second Intifada. I was so worried about my children. But still, I wasn't tempted to move.

In the summer of 2002, I visited my older brothers, who were still in the United States. They'd been there since the early 1980s and were living in Chicago. I loved America, I loved the people there. I liked how organized everything was in the city. In general, the people were welcoming to me. My brothers' neighbors were very nice. And people are free there. You don't have soldiers coming into your house at two a.m. and ordering you out into the streets.

But Palestine is so beautiful—why do you think everyone wants Palestine? When I was in Chicago, I remember telling my brother, "I like America, but I haven't seen anything in the U.S. that I like as much as sitting on the front steps of my own home when there's a breeze, or being able to go into the yard and pick fresh grapes and figs." So my brother went out and bought me some grapes and figs, all the things I had named. But they didn't taste the same to me. I didn't like the grapes at all! Everything was imported, nothing fresh. I was supposed to stay in Chicago for four months, but I could only make it for a month and a half. I was homesick. Also, it was so hot!

A few years later, in 2006, my husband ended up going to the States to work with some family and neighbors who had a store in Miami. My husband would ask a lot about Abdal Aziz when he called home. He didn't ask about the other sons as much as he asked about Abdal Aziz. He was worried. When he talked to Abdal Aziz on the phone, my husband would preach to him, "Calm down, don't throw stones."

It was hard to be alone with my children, but by that time my sons were all grown-ups and they were working. Only Abdal Aziz and Muhammed,

the youngest, were still at school. My three daughters were already married. Abdal Aziz finished high school in 2007, did the tawjihi exams,[11] and wanted to apply for Al-Quds Open University.[12] He didn't like school so much, but he liked everything else: soccer, *dabka*,[13] and all his other after-school activities. After the tawjihi, he spent one year not studying, but he wanted to eventually study business—I have a cousin who runs a supermarket, and Abdal Aziz spent a lot of afternoons helping him out there, learning about how to run a small business.

I FELT I WOULD LOSE HIM SOMEDAY

Abdal Aziz was a soccer player, and he was the goalkeeper for the Al-Bireh Institute team in Ramallah. He was also a coach in Kafr Malek for younger boys. In early October 2008, he was twenty years old and getting his passport ready, because his team had an opportunity to go play in Europe.

During that time, Abdal Aziz was still going out every night to be with his friends. On the night of October 16, I went to sleep at around eleven-thirty. Abdal Aziz called at one a.m. He had a habit of asking me when I answered the phone, "How are you, Ma?"

I told him, "I'm going to sleep now. Do you need anything?" He told me, "I'm coming with friends, so please make us some dinner to eat." I told him, "I don't sleep very well because of you, and you want me to prepare dinner for you now?" So he asked me to speak with Muhammed, and he told his younger brother to prepare dinner for him, all his favorite things. My room is just beside the kitchen, so when Abdal Aziz came back with his friends, he'd close the door so they wouldn't bother me, and they'd sit outside to eat dinner.

Still, that night I heard him come in with his friends, so I got up and put on my dress. I looked at him through the door eating dinner with his friends outside. I looked at my watch, and it was around three a.m. I thought, *It's late. Abdal Aziz won't go out again. His friends will leave, and he'll go to sleep in his room.* And because I was comfortable that Abdal Aziz was at home, I went back to bed.

Not long afterward, I woke up again and opened the window. Although it was October, it was still hot. When I opened the window, I realized my son Muhammed was outside, crying and calling for a car. He told me that there had been a shooting. I went to Abdal Aziz's room and saw that he wasn't there. I put on my clothes and started screaming that Abdal Aziz had died. I knew then. I felt it immediately that he was dead. My heart dropped.

I went to our neighbors' house. I told Abu Adel, our neighbor, that Abdal Aziz died. He told me no, but I insisted that he was the one that had been shot. I told my neighbor's son to take me to the hospital because he had a car, but he reassured me that it wasn't Abdal Aziz who was injured. But I insisted. I wanted to be with my son. That was that. My son Fadi showed up at the house, and he and Muhammed tried to comfort me and told me it wasn't Abdal Aziz. I told them, "No, it is your brother. It is Abdal Aziz." They told me that Abdal Aziz was with his friends, and I told them that if that was so, to bring him to me. Then some of Abdal Aziz's friends came and told me that he'd run away with some of the others. I asked if there were any more soldiers in the village, and they told me there was a patrol nearby. And so I asked them, "Why did Abdal Aziz run away? Abdal Aziz doesn't run away if there's a soldier in the village, so I don't believe you."

When my three daughters heard that someone had been killed, they came running to my house with their husbands, asking, "Where is he?" They too felt that it was Abdal Aziz who had been killed. The women from our neighborhood came to my house for an hour and tried to calm me down, to tell me that it wasn't Abdal Aziz, or that he was just injured. I told them, "No, it is Abdal Aziz. I know that he is dead." Then finally someone else from the village came to the house and told me, "The thing that you've suspected is true." She had witnessed the scene.

In a few moments, a huge crowd showed up at the house, and they were all crying because they loved Abdal Aziz, and he was not there anymore. No one would take me to see him at the hospital because they felt it would be a shock for me. Finally, at around ten a.m., the Red Crescent ambulance brought his body back to the house.[14]

I learned the story from Abdal Aziz's friends who had been with him that night. They said that after I went to sleep, Abdal Aziz got a phone call

from a friend who told him that a patrol of soldiers was coming. Abdal Aziz used to stand on a particular roof and throw stones from there, so that's where they both went to wait for the soldiers. But on this night, the soldiers were down below in the garden hiding between the trees, waiting for him. He was with his friend on the roof, and when they threw the first stone, the soldiers opened fire on them. His friend was shot in the shoulder, and Abdal Aziz was shot in the leg.

Abdal Aziz's friend told him, "We're being ambushed! Let's hand ourselves over to the soldiers." Abdal Aziz's reply was, "I would rather die than hand myself over." Because Abdal Aziz was injured in his leg, he couldn't run, but his friend was able to run away. He wanted to help Abdal Aziz, but he couldn't. According to my son's friends, when the soldiers came up to the roof and saw that it was Abdal Aziz, they kept him there.

The bullet had entered the back of his left leg and come out the front. They left him to bleed, and they wouldn't allow a doctor to see him. They surrounded the area, and only after he died did they let the Red Crescent ambulance come and take him. The neighbors all came outside to check on him, to help him, but the soldiers told them, "If you come near us, we will shoot you, too."

He didn't die among his family or his friends. That's what hurts me the most. That's the most painful thing. The soldiers handed him over to the ambulance with the cuffs on his hands.

The day after Abdal Aziz died, my husband was in a café in Miami, playing cards. A relative had gone there to tell him the news, but before he even said anything, my husband saw the look in his eyes and told him, "Stop. I know Abdal Aziz just died." He came back to Palestine as soon as he could—he was home within two weeks. For two days after he returned, I couldn't speak to my husband. He did all the talking. And then he decided to stay in Kafr Malek.

The boy who was with Abdal Aziz survived. He's married now, and his wife is pregnant. That night he ran away, he was treated for his injury, and he was arrested and put in jail for two years. Many of my son's other friends have been arrested since. They were brought to trial on some made-up charges and all sentenced to five and a half years. I wish they had arrested Abdal Aziz and not killed him.

It was what God wanted. I always advised my son to stay at home, not to endanger himself. I would tell him that I felt I would lose him someday. Two weeks before his death, Abdal Aziz was with his friends in a car and he was hanging out the window. It was the night of Eid.[15] And the guys told him, “Come inside, you don’t want to get killed on a holy night.” He told them, “I won’t be killed. I won’t die like this. I will die a martyr.” He knew.

I’VE DECIDED TO LIVE

If you ask anyone in the village, they can tell you about Abdal Aziz. The day he died, seven satellite channels came to the village here to document what was going on. When they brought him in the hearse, there were hundreds of cars following behind. His funeral was so big. I didn’t expect so many people.

After a death, we have three days for people to come and pay their respects, but for Abdal Aziz it took three weeks. His friends from all over came to the house and called me to go outside. We have a tradition where you kiss a person’s hand and hold it to your own forehead as a sign of respect. One by one, they all kissed my hand, held it to their foreheads, and told me they were my sons now instead of Abdal Aziz. Even now, they always come visit me, and I go visit them. There was also a bus of girls who were friends of Abdal Aziz from the *dabka* team, and they came crying and searching for Abdal Aziz’s mother.

They even put a tent near the hall in the village center, and thousands of people came. The student senate at Birzeit University suspended classes because of Abdal Aziz’s death.[16] Usually they don’t suspend classes if someone dies, not even a student at the university. Even though he wasn’t a student, everyone knew Abdal Aziz, even the teachers, and they put up posters with his photo inside the university. One year after his death, one of his friends had to present his graduation thesis, and he invited me to come. I went to the university and everyone, all the students were saying, “That’s Abdal Aziz’s mother. That’s Abdal Aziz’s mother.” I didn’t know what to do—to cry, or to feel proud, or to smile.

When someone loses a son, what do you expect? I raised him for twenty-one years, and I used to look at him when he went out and think to myself, *Is it possible that this is my son?* And I lost him overnight. And he was so beautiful, my son. He is now with his God in heaven. Whenever I go outside now, there's a banner with his photo on it hanging in the place where he died. Whenever I see it, I feel guilty because I couldn't hold him and hug him during the last minutes before he died.

After he died, life was complicated. For one whole year, I didn't sleep at night. I drove everyone crazy after his death, especially at two or three a.m. It's the time when Abdal Aziz died, and I would always be awake then. I'd wake up and feel like I needed to leave the house. I either went to one of my daughters' houses or even my cousins. I was so tired, and my daughters were so worried about me.

I went to the doctor, and he found my blood pressure to be at very dangerous levels. He told me, "You will have a heart attack if you continue living like this." It was so scary. For three whole years, they gave me sedative shots, sometimes every day and sometimes twice a week.

Since Abdal Aziz died, I stopped doing embroidery. I used to make traditional dresses, but now I've stopped. I don't see 100 percent, and I need good vision to embroider. I used to sell the dresses to help my husband, as our financial situation now is very hard. My younger son, Mohammad, studies journalism at Birzeit University. He wants to continue and get his master's, and Birzeit University is more expensive than the other universities. My husband only works as a taxi driver. Even the taxi that he drives belongs to someone else. He only covers the university tuition and Muhammed's daily expenses. I can't ask my other son for help because he wants to build his future. My oldest son is a teacher. Now he should start building a new house, but there are no good jobs. He wants to get married, but it all depends on the money.

My second daughter once came and told me that Abdal Aziz is alive. In Islam, in our religion, we consider martyrs to be alive in heaven. She told me, "You are crying every day for Abdal Aziz, and he's only one person, and he's alive with God." She told me that there are fifteen people in our family, including the cousins and the grandchildren. She asked, "Do you want to die and leave us all too?" Since then, I've decided to live my life for

my daughters and sons who are still alive, and my grief is only in my heart now.

Sometimes one of my daughters comes and sees my eyes are red and asks me if I was crying, and I deny it and say, “No, why would I cry?” I do it to make them feel stronger because they were affected by the death of their brother also. It’s been four years now, and I feel every day that it was like yesterday, and I always see him and always remember him. In Palestine, we often say that problems that start so heavy begin to disappear with time. But this weight stays. It’s not fading. I am honored that my son is a hero who defended his land. He defended his country and his village. But I don’t want my other sons to get killed. Abdal Aziz is enough.

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[1] Kafr Malek is a village of about 3,000 people located nine miles northeast of Ramallah.

[2] The First Intifada was an uprising throughout the West Bank and Gaza against Israeli military occupation. It began in December 1987 and lasted until 1993. *Intifada* in Arabic means “to shake off.” For more information, see Appendix I, page 295.

[3] 1967 was the year of the Six-Day War that culminated in Israel occupying the West Bank. For more on the Six-Day War, see the Glossary, page 304.

[4] Marriage between cousins was once considered an ideal match in Palestine and throughout the Middle East, especially in rural areas.

[5] *Ma’amoul* are shortbread pastries filled with dates or nuts and pressed in a wooden mold with an intricate design, and are commonly made during Eid Al-Fitr and Eid Al-Adha, the major Muslim holidays. Palestinian Christians also make them for Easter.

[6] The protests, clashes with Israeli military, boycotts, and other acts of civil disobedience that marked the beginning of the First Intifada started in December 1987. Most of the organized action began on December 9, two days after Abdal Aziz’s birth. For more information, see Appendix I, page 295.

[7] *Za’atar is* the name of both a spice similar to thyme that grows wild in Palestine and a blend of spices. Za’atar is a staple of local cooking in Palestine and much of the Middle East.

[8] Taybeh is a neighboring Christian village of 1,500 people about one mile away from Kafr Malek. It’s locally famous for a brewery that makes Palestine’s only beer.

[9] In Palestine, saying someone is “active” is shorthand for saying the person is involved in resisting the Israeli occupation. It can mean anything from organizing, to going to protests, to throwing stones, to more militant activity.

[10] Fatah, PFLP, and Hamas are political parties within Palestine. For more information, see the Glossary, page 304.

[11] An exit exam for high school. For more on the tawjihi exams, see the Glossary, page 304.

[12] Al-Quds Open University is a mixed on-site and distance-learning university system with campuses in the West Bank, Gaza, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. There is also a separate university system in the West Bank called Al-Quds University, which isn't affiliated with Al-Quds Open University.

[13] *Dabka* is a traditional Palestinian dance.

[14] For more on the Red Cross and Red Crescent, see the Glossary, page 304.

[15] Eid Al-Fitr is a major feast that marks the end of the month of Ramadan.

[16] Birzeit University is one of the most prestigious universities in Palestine. It's located just outside Ramallah, not far from Kafr Malek.

GHASSAN ANDONI IN BEIT SAHOUR, WEST BANK

GHASSAN ANDONI

Physics professor, 58
Born in Beit Sahour, West Bank
Interviewed in Beit Sahour, West Bank

Despite his slight frame, Ghasssan Andoni has a strong presence, and commands attention whenever he speaks. Ghassan is a physics professor and activist. He lives in the community of Beit Sahour, which is nestled in the hills just east of Bethlehem and one of the few mostly Christian communities in Palestine. In total, Christians make up around 2 percent of the total population of the West Bank. Legend has it that the residents of Beit Sahour are descended from the shepherds who visited Jesus on the night of his birth; Sahouris jokingly claim that it was their notorious talent for gossip that spread the story of Jesus so widely. We visit Ghassan often during the spring and summer of 2014 at the modest but cheerful apartment where he lives with his wife and twenty-four-year-old son. The family has decorated the apartment in purple and white, and Ghassan has used his metalworking skills to build a small elevator to take groceries from the first floor to the third.

Ghassan's life has taken him from a refugee camp in Jordan, to universities in Iraq and England, to a war in Lebanon. Even when home in Beit Sahour, he has been extremely active. He played a key role in the community's campaign of civil disobedience during the First Intifada, and he helped found the International Solidarity Movement, an organization that brought thousands of international volunteers to Palestine during the Second Intifada. His activism led to his nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2006. These days he lives a relatively quiet life, commuting to and

from Birzeit University where he teaches. Still, he has no doubts he will become active again when the time is right.

DO I BELONG HERE OR DO I BELONG THERE?

My family has been in Beit Sahour for many generations, as far back as we know.[1] I was born here in 1956. I have two sisters and three brothers, and I'm the oldest male. I grew up in the home that my father built in the early 1950s. He was a teacher then. My mother worked in the home. When I was a child, if I looked out at the hills from my home, there was nothing there except trees and fields. I grew up in a fairly closed community. It's a society where if you run into someone in the street, that person is probably a cousin or an aunt or uncle. On the one hand, this made me feel very safe growing up. But on the other hand, I've always spent a lot of my time here on social obligations. Every week there are weddings, baptisms, and graduations. Since my family is connected to thousands of others here, we're expected to be there when others are celebrating or when they're sad. All of these gatherings can be exhausting.

In 1962, at the age of six, I left Beit Sahour. My father got a job as an accountant in Amman, Jordan, and so he bought a house there and we all went to live with him. In Amman, the paradox was that my family had a home that was on the border between a middle-class neighborhood and the very poor Al-Hussein refugee camp.[2] So my home was at the border of two ways of life, and I was always wondering, *Do I belong here or do I belong there*?

At that time, conditions in the refugee camp were very bad. The houses were made of thin iron sheets with asbestos covering the outsides. There was sewage in the street, which was really just a narrow dirt path. Many of my friends were from the camp, so I spent real time in those slums. Of course, my family wasn't comfortable with that. In Beit Sahour, I can't remember having a fight with anyone. But in Jordan, I had to be ready every time I walked to the shop. I'd always meet a couple of people who wanted to bother me. I didn't like beating people up, but I also fought when I had to. I learned that it was not the size, it was not the muscles, it was the

daring heart that won. I learned not to think of the consequences, just jump into a fight. Every time I came home, I had a new scar somewhere.

Three or four of our neighbors were Christian families. That's why my father bought our home where he did. But my father was very secular, so he didn't put me in a private Christian school. I was the only Christian kid in the government schools that I went to. The schools were not obliged to provide me with a Christian religion teacher, but I had the right to go out and play during religion class. But it's boring to play by yourself. So I asked to sit and listen in religion class.

I wanted to know more, so I started to read and memorize the Quran. Our religion teacher wanted to justify his own ideas by taking a verse from the Quran and throwing it in our faces. I started arguing with him and quoting my own memorized verses. He got annoyed and asked me to just go outside to play. I was much younger than others in my class, because I was accepted into second grade in Jordan at the age of six. I did well in school, but in fourth grade I was still a little kid, and there were people sitting beside me who were fourteen years old because they had failed classes. One of them, a Bedouin, was actually married.[3] He was fifteen years old I think. I had to learn to stand up for myself.

I spent my summer vacations in Beit Sahour. In the camps, it was a struggle all the time, but in Beit Sahour, I felt safe and comfortable. I had lots of fun with cousins. It was like a respite for many years.

In 1967 when I was eleven, I traveled to Beit Sahour to visit my grandmother and aunt. It was an easy trip then, because there were no checkpoints at the time. My father could just put me on a bus. One day during my visit that year, I walked down the street to buy some coffee for my aunt. While I was walking back, the Israelis started shelling the village —it was the start of the Six-Day War.[4] There were no buildings where I was walking, so I had to jump into a field and cover myself until it was safe to move. I was probably crying. I remember maybe twelve or fifteen bombs exploding nearby. When I got back to my relatives' house, I learned that one of my neighbors had been killed.

I saw the soldiers coming into Beit Sahour with their weapons. Everybody was scared. Some people were saying the Israelis would kill us, we should leave, and others were saying we should stay. But it was over in

a week. I still remember an injured bird that had been trapped in my relatives' house after the bombing ended. I caught it and cared for it while I was waiting to go home. After a couple of weeks, the Red Cross arranged a bus ride for me and others back to Jordan. I tried to take the bird with me back home. I held it in my hands on the trip back, but it died on the way.

A CIVIL WAR IS SOMETHING THAT YOU SHOULDN'T LIVE THROUGH

Struggle was the norm when I was young. I never lived a peaceful life. But the problem is, I started liking it. It started thrilling me. It was like someone throwing you into the sea and you have to find your way to the shore and you have to struggle hard, hard, hard. When I returned to Jordan, I continued hanging out with my friends in the refugee camp for the next few years. Things in the camp were changing, starting in 1970. When I was around fourteen, I started seeing weapons in the streets of the camp, and I started seeing banners of liberation organizations. I was seeing the birth of the Palestinian revolution. The environment changed dramatically. I saw people smiling, talking. I saw a sense of pride. When the guns appeared, everybody found himself. Suddenly, the kids stopped fighting each other. We started mostly playing with toy guns. Slowly the phenomenon spread all over, and I started seeing people with real guns and wearing the traditional keffiyeh.[5]

I started learning. I took every opportunity to go to the various offices of different organizations and just sit and listen to people talking about refugees and the origins of the camps. Then the friction started between the PLO and the King's Army.[6] The line was drawn with Jordanians and Palestinians against each other, and Palestinians started getting fired from their jobs, including my father. Then we had gunfire in the streets, gunfire and bombs every single day. I went to school in the morning and then when the fighting started, the school would discharge us and we students would make our way back home, sometimes hiding and sometimes crawling to avoid fire.

Soon, there was destruction everywhere. It seemed like every single home in the neighborhood was hit by bombs and gunfire. It was even worse in the camps. One bomb would destroy four of those shacks. Our home got hit by shells as well, five or six times. It had holes in it, but it didn't fall down. But we lost our water tanks, and then we had to hunt for water, and that was risky. I think it was the Iraqi army that eventually started bringing water tanks on trucks. But they brought the water to a place very far from our home. We had to take a container, go to the distribution site, get the water, and then make our way home.

In the final days of September 1970, we suffered a severe bombardment. We were hiding in the basement and the ceiling started coming down on us. So we had to run and seek shelter in our neighbors' cellar. The cellar was actually a small rocky cave and protected, so there were about ten or twelve families from the neighborhood stuck in that place. It was summertime, so it was hot, and it was dark. We spent two nights there. Nobody slept. When the Jordanian army came, we were all in that cellar. A civil war is something that you shouldn't live through. I mean a war, okay, but a civil war, I don't think anyone should experience it.

After the PLO was defeated and the Jordanian army reoccupied Amman, all the men were asked to gather in a certain square. All of us were taken, everyone from the age of thirteen until the age of eighty. I was still fourteen, and that was my first experience of detention. They took us to a desert detention center in Jordan. I stayed there for fourteen days. It was ugly—really, really ugly—the way they treated us. We were rarely fed. I saw so many scenes of beatings and torture. I remember the guards examined our shoulders for marks that might be left from carrying a rifle. Anyone with a mark was taken, and we didn't see him again. After fourteen days they just started releasing us gradually, starting with elderly people and then very young people, and then I was released together with my father and we went back to our home.

When I came home, I cried. Everything that we owned in Jordan was destroyed. Our home was almost totally destroyed and our car was destroyed. We were a shattered family, and we thought we didn't have a future in Jordan. It reminded me of 1967. It was my second experience of being invaded and having someone take over.

A group from the Beit Sahour municipality managed to come to Jordan and give some assistance to the Beit Sahour families that had been living in Amman. My uncle was part of that assistance group. Seeing my uncle and getting some help was the first nice thing that had happened in a long time. My father asked him to try to get us a permit to go and visit Beit Sahour. And he did. It was probably three months after our detention that we came back to Beit Sahour. We were very lucky, because my family had property in Beit Sahour registered in our name, so we were able to get residency IDs to live in the West Bank. Otherwise we might have spent our lives in Jordan.

“IT’S LIKE A TINY TERRORIST”

I came back to Beit Sahour in 1970, when I was in the tenth grade. Beit Sahour as a community hadn’t changed much since the occupation began in 1967. In fact, the occupation worked to strengthen the community. When you live under rules that don’t represent you, you keep your traditions as a safeguard. If you have a problem, you solve it internally instead of going to court, because you don’t trust the authorities. So, in a way, occupation actually strengthened some of the tribal aspects of our society—not just in Beit Sahour, but all of Palestine.

My father bought a knitting machine to manufacture clothes in our house. My parents would travel to Tel Aviv to sell the clothes they assembled. After some time, my dad opened a clothing shop. I think it was tiring for him and my mother. They didn’t have any weekends, because they were always in Tel Aviv buying fabric or selling clothes. Meanwhile, I registered for school in the village. That was a period when I was studying, but I was also politically active. I started inciting demonstrations against the occupation with a few others, going to gatherings, and talking politics. And the violence inside me from spending so much time in the refugee camp was still there, so I caused trouble in school. The teachers liked me because I was smart and got good grades, but at the same time they were very annoyed by the way I treated them. My friends and I played a lot of tricks on our teachers to make fun of them. A few times I locked the headmaster in his office so that he wouldn’t disrupt our demonstrations.

In 1972, my tawjihi exam year, I was arrested.[7] The Israelis crashed their way into my home just after midnight and asked for me. My mother opened my room, and they looked at me. I was tiny. I was sixteen at that time, but I looked like I was fourteen, so the arresting officers didn't believe they had the right guy. One of them said, "What's *that*? It's like a tiny terrorist."

So I was taken and interrogated, and I spent four months in prison. I was the little kid there, and it was hard. I was a minor and I was put in jail with adults. The interrogators would beat me until I fainted. But in jail my world became much bigger. I met people from different places, from villages, from refugee camps, from cities, people with different accents, people with different cultures. Everybody took care of me. I was the little Christian. I liked the other prisoners very much, and I left prison feeling that I needed to do something for them.

When I was released, the tawjihi exam was in a month's time, and I had studied nothing. So I decided to do it the next year. But then one of my relatives sort of challenged me. He said, "You can't do it, you're not ready." I hated anybody telling me I couldn't do something, so I took the exam right away, and I earned higher marks than my classmates.

YOU DON'T SHUT UP IN TIMES OF WAR

After I passed my high school exams, I went to Baghdad to study physics. It was the most challenging topic in school, and I like challenges. Also, I learned about religions early in my life, but they never gave me answers. I started looking more to science as the way to understand what was around me. Iraq when I lived there was paradise. I lived the best times of my life there. Then in 1976, a couple of years after I started college, I volunteered to go to Lebanon during the civil war.[8] I was twenty years old. I'd been raised as a committed nationalist, and I believed at the time that I needed to liberate Palestine through guns. I believed that I shouldn't stay silent about what was going on in Lebanon, the refugee camps, and the massacres. So I volunteered to go. I went with my best friends who I had met in Baghdad. My family didn't know. I actually wrote several letters and gave them to

somebody to send—one every two weeks—saying that I was getting some training in one of the factories in Iraq and that was why I couldn't come back to visit that year. If my mother knew I was in Lebanon, she would have had a heart attack, so I thought, *Why put her in that situation?*

We were part of a unit and we got some weapons training because otherwise we would have probably died immediately. You have to understand the environment. The minute we stepped into Beirut, we were in a battlefield.[9] If a Palestinian refugee camp was here, then a few meters over was a Phalangist Christian neighborhood.[10] There was no place you could be where you were not part of the war. My group was supposed to protect Palestinian refugee camps if they were attacked and help the civilians cope by providing some medical aid and food. Sometimes we would go out and look for snipers. There was no clear long-term plan, but every minute we had something to do. Every minute there was shooting, or someone injured, or people trapped somewhere who needed to be evacuated.

One of the most tragic things that I faced was when Maronite militias managed to overrun a refugee camp called Tel Al-Zaatar.[11] Many of the men in the camp were killed. We met the women and children coming out of there after being under siege for eighty days. They were starving. They looked like ghosts. That scene shocked me. So after seeing those refugees, my friends took me to Al-Hamra Street, which was where all the nightclubs were. It was neutral territory. You could sit there and the one you had been fighting in the morning was sitting next to you with a drink.

I never killed someone as far as I know. I never saw someone, pointed a gun at him, and shot him. When there were enemies, what we would do is to engage in heavy shooting to prevent them from shooting us. In the fighting, my friends and I were pretty much useless. We weren't trained enough to protect anybody. But I think we compensated for that by helping people. I cannot stay silent when my flesh and blood is being attacked and killed. Otherwise I will not have peace inside knowing that happened and I did nothing.

After spending three months in Lebanon, I started thinking, *What the hell are we doing here?* It was obvious to me that in Lebanon, nobody could achieve any kind of victory. So why fight? I saw a few of my closest friends

lose their lives. I was ready to die, but it was extremely hard to witness the death of my friends.

Also, my image of the ideal freedom fighter that I had developed in prison started to have cracks in it.

Being a soldier is a specific lifestyle. You have a gun, you fight, you kill and sometimes get killed, and you get a salary at the end of the month. As a soldier, you just do your job, but people like me who volunteered would sometimes ask a hell of a lot of questions. It seems as though people often think, *In times of war, everybody should shut up.* But no, in times of war, everybody should speak. That's what I believe. You shut up in times of peace, but you don't shut up in times of war. After three months, I decided that I wanted to continue my studies. I didn't want to be commanded by people who didn't accept questions and didn't answer them. So I went back to Baghdad.

By 1977, I was twenty-one years old and done with my bachelor's degree. I didn't want to stay in Baghdad or Lebanon. I was very committed to the Palestinian cause. I knew that the only places I could be effective in the Palestinian resistance was in the occupied territories or in Jordan, and so I decided to go back, even though I knew I could be arrested by the Israelis or the Jordanians because of my time in Lebanon.

We knew that because there were so many Jordanian students at our university—some of whom probably worked for the Jordanian secret service—that the authorities knew about our trip to Lebanon. I was always questioned by Jordanian intelligence when I was crossing from Amman back to the West Bank, and this time I suspected it would be worse. They took my passport at the airport in Amman and summoned me to interrogation. I lied, and I don't feel proud of that, but it was necessary. I almost got away with it, but then one of my friends came into Jordan earlier than expected and the intelligence connected our stories. The officer said, "I'm not going to arrest you. I'll give you one night of sleep and then tomorrow you come to my office, beg me to listen to your story, and tell me everything you know, and maybe I'll allow you to go home to Beit Sahour. Otherwise, I might arrest you." When he let me go, I just took off. With help from one of my uncles, I was able to bribe an officer at the bridge over the Jordan River and cross into the West Bank the next day.

WHEN IS THIS GOING TO STOP?

Ten days after I arrived in Beit Sahour, in the summer of 1977, I was arrested. Israeli soldiers came to my home at midnight and I was taken to Al-Muskubiya in Jerusalem.[12] I spent three months under interrogation. At nights, I would be taken to the old stables the police used as cells and there would be questioning with beatings. They had some information about the Lebanon trip, but they weren't sure about it. They asked about names that it wasn't possible for them to invent, two names in particular of individuals who had come to Lebanon with me but weren't part of my group of friends. But they didn't have enough information to know that I was in Lebanon. They were guessing. After the initial questioning, I spent at least forty-five days in solitary confinement, then they released me without asking me another question. I don't know why. It was either a mistake and they forgot about me, or it was a punishment or some kind of revenge. I'm still puzzled about this.

I came back to Beit Sahour, but I had trouble settling in. I spent a couple of years trying to figure out what to do next. Then I was arrested again at age twenty-four. At this point, nobody in my family knew I had been to Lebanon—that was my secret.

I was taken back to Al-Muskubiya. Instead of taking me to one of the cells, I was taken to the yard. My hand was cuffed to a water pipe that was so high I couldn't sit. I had to be standing all the time, and they put a sack over my head. I was left there for five consecutive days and nights, standing, no sleep at all and without anybody talking to me. The pain in my legs was bad because all the blood sort of settled down there, and I got disoriented after five days and nights without sleeping. Every now and then I would collapse from exhaustion and I'd be dangling from my wrists. After that I was taken immediately to the interrogation office. I was afraid. Every now and then they'd strike me in the head without warning, so I was tense all the time. I remember the only thing in my mind was, *When is this going to stop*?

In the interrogation center they wasted no time. The interrogator told me about the confession of the man who had been with me in Lebanon. He said, "Listen, I don't need your confession." At that time, Israel had issued

what was called the Tamir Law. Tamir Law was an amendment to the laws of the military court laws that allowed the judge to sentence people based on the confessions of other people, not the accused. If the judge was convinced that the informant was telling the truth, then he didn't need the confession of the accused. The interrogator told me, "Listen, you are going to court whether you confess or not. We have enough evidence to send you to jail for a long period of time. It's up to you to decide."

So I told them about my involvement. I said I'd volunteered to do humanitarian work in the refugee camps in Lebanon, and that, after spending three months there, I decided to go back and continue my studies. The interrogator said, "We know that you did more, but we'll accept your confession." And I signed my confession and it was sent to court. I was sentenced to two years in prison and three years of probation. After the sentencing, my family knew that I had been in Lebanon. My mother told me that she had sensed there had been something wrong and she never believed the letters that I sent, but she was happy that I was safe and that she saw me in front of her and not in a grave.

TOTAL CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

After I was released from prison around 1980, I got a job teaching at the Lutheran school in Beit Sahour.[13] It was around that time that I met a woman named Selwa—she was studying at Bethlehem University then.[14] We got to like each other. She was one of the prettiest girls in Beit Sahour. Before too long, Selwa and I got married.

Then in 1983, I managed to get a scholarship from the British Consulate and went to do my master's degree in physics at the University of Reading in England.[15] I didn't like Reading. It's a very conservative town and there was a big drinking culture. I also don't like British tea. I got used to Iraqi tea where you get the tea and boil it until it's black like tar and then you pour some of the tea in a cup with some water and ten spoons of sugar. I got addicted to it, and so British tea seemed tasteless. But I completed my master's degree. My wife didn't come with me, but she visited two times.

When I finished my master's, I returned to the West Bank. Then I talked to a university in Amsterdam, and they invited me there to pursue my Ph.D. and do research with them. But when I applied to leave, I was refused. The Amsterdam university communicated directly with the foreign ministry in Israel and were sent a letter that said without any reservations, "If Mr. Andoni leaves the country, he will be a threat to the security of the state of Israel." So I was forced to stay. I was living an ordinary, frustrated life. Something inside me was boiling.

Not long after that, in 1987, the First Intifada erupted.[16] Suddenly the environment changed. A few months before the Intifada, people in Beit Sahour had been busy going to parties and shopping. Suddenly, everybody was talking about occupation and politics. Everybody became a committed nationalist and a lover of Palestine. Yesterday, they were shopping in Tal Piyot and the day before they were in Eilat giving money to Israel.[17] Now these same people were in the streets in the thousands. I had seen small demonstrations that started and ended, but I hadn't seen a whole nation standing on its toes as they were in 1987. I was inspired.

And then it really began—demonstrations, marches, occasional clashes with soldiers and settlers. Soldiers came and abused people. We started organizing, and I started to have meetings with my friends and community leaders. I didn't want the common way of doing things where somebody throws a stone and the soldiers come and attack them. To my understanding, we were trying to convince the Israelis that occupation was not sustainable. In the back of our minds, some of us thought—and I was one of them—that we needed to move carefully towards total civil disobedience. I can't claim that I had done any reading on this. I knew about Gandhi and the civil rights movement in the United States, but I had never studied them in-depth. But it was obvious to me that with thousands of people, the approach could be powerful. There was almost a consensus in Beit Sahour that in order to ensure community involvement in the Intifada, we had to inject some democracy. And from that came the idea to let each neighborhood elect its own committee. And then out of those committees we would have a central committee that would have authority in town during this period. The elections were like the traditional Greek election. There were no ballots or boxes. It was out in the open. Each neighborhood gathered and agreed on

the people to represent them. Then those committees decided on a group of four or five people to become the central committee. I was one of the members of the central committee. Since we didn't have courts, this committee had the power to determine law.

The business owners of Beit Sahour decided to stop paying their taxes to Israel. People were very enthusiastic about the tax strike. Almost everyone in town participated. The military government started confiscating people's cars as a way to pressure them to pay their taxes. Or they would confiscate everything in someone's shop or home.

One of the leaders of the strike, Elias Rishmawi lost around $100,000 worth of goods, and at that time $100,000 dollars was like $1 million today. But nobody gave into the pressure. Probably because Elias lost so much, others felt ashamed if they complained about losing $5,000. He set an example. It was during this time that the people of Beit Sahour gathered in front of the municipal building and threw out their identity cards. Our message was, we don't recognize Israeli authority, and if this ID represents their authority over us, then we don't want it.

The tax revolt led to a curfew for all of Beit Sahour. So schools were closed, universities were closed, kindergartens were closed, and we started realizing that this would go on for a long time. It wasn't going to be two or three weeks. So we established what we called underground schools. With little effort, different neighborhoods started organizing teachers and students and then opening schools in homes, apartments, any empty place, and students started going there. We realized that what our community was doing had to be reported so that it could spread to other communities. And that's why we started investing real effort in attracting the attention of media, people interested in the region, visiting groups, and fact-finding and human rights organizations. And this I can claim I played a major role in because I knew English, and I was a good communicator. We started an organization called the Palestinian Center for Rapprochement Between Peoples, a group designed to start a dialogue between Palestinians and people of other nationalities. International media started paying attention to our cause.

Perhaps as a consequence, the military started cracking down on our town. Beit Sahour was placed under a siege and nothing was allowed in or out. So then came the idea of victory gardens, just like in World War II.

Suddenly each neighborhood had a garden. Beit Sahour was under siege, but everybody in town was sitting on balconies and having barbecues. That drove the soldiers crazy. And then came the idea of the cows.

EIGHTEEN WANTED COWS

I want to warn you that I've told this story so many times that probably each time something gets added in order to make it more funny. It's a community story, because everybody's added a bit to it. But the bulk of the story is true. It goes like this.

One of the hardships we faced during the First Intifada was a lack of milk. Most milk in the region was produced in Israel, and we were boycotting Israeli products. Some of the leaders of the Beit Sahour resistance decided to start a ranch, get cows, milk them, and provide milk to the community for free. In order to make it more symbolic, we wanted the milk to be distributed at three in the morning at the doorsteps of each family, and the bottle would be distributed by a young person masked with a keffiyeh. That was the concept. But we needed cows. Where would we find the cows? The only cows around were in an Israeli kibbutz.[18] So we needed to buy cows from the kibbutz and bring them to Beit Sahour. Finally, a group of people who had some money volunteered to pay for eighteen cows. The group went together and bought the cows, loaded them in trucks, and brought them to Beit Sahour around midnight.

Now, the people who bought the cows were doctors, engineers, business people, university professors—not dairy farmers, okay? So the trucks arrive in Beit Sahour and someone says, "Guys, let's get the cows out of the trucks." But the cows didn't want to get out of the trucks. One clever man came up with the idea of making a loud noise to scare them. Unfortunately, the plan worked too well. The cows jumped out of the trucks and ran away into the hills. Imagine teachers, scholars, doctors, and business people in suits running after cows at midnight in the mountains. The story goes that one teacher—a small man—chased a cow and nearly cornered it before the cow turned around and started chasing him! So it was all chaos until neighbors were awakened by the noise and came out. They were Bedouin

farmers and they knew about livestock, so they managed to control the cows and get them into pasture.

A few days after the cows arrived near Beit Sahour, the military governor of the region and a big force of soldiers came to town. Each cow from the kibbutz had a number branded on it to identify the cow. A soldier photographed each cow, a personal portrait with its face and number, like wanted criminals. The military governor said the cows were a security threat to the state of Israel, and if they were still there in twenty-four hours, he would arrest everyone. You would have to ask him why he was so upset. There was nothing we had done that was illegal. I think what bothered him was purely our defiance. Anyway we figured, *Let's stick to our plan and see what he does.* The military general didn't take the cows, but he arrested a few people for punishment and threatened the villagers who were providing water for the animals. So the pressure was mounting, and finally we decided to evacuate the place. There was a hidden cave that would be suitable for the eighteen cows, and we decided to move them there.

It happened that the owner of the land that the cave was on was a butcher, and if those cows were discovered, he would say that he'd bought them for slaughter. There was nothing illegal about this, so that was a good cover. And we kept up with our milk deliveries.

The military governor couldn't let go of the problem of the cows. He knew he was being disobeyed, and he wanted badly to know where the cows were. So he laid siege to the town, and he started a search from home to home, from hill to hill, from cave to cave in the entire area of Beit Sahour, searching for the cows. Even helicopters filled the air above the hills, trying to see if there was any strange movement. In town, soldiers walked around with photos of each cow, stopping people in the street and asking them, "Have you seen this cow?" The people they stopped would joke, "Well, the face is familiar. I'm not sure. The nose I remember was a little smaller."

The search continued for a couple of days. Finally the soldiers arrived at the butcher's place, but the cave was well hidden so you couldn't discover it easily. They looked carefully and found nothing and were about to leave when one of the cows made a noise. So the soldier who heard the noise went back to the cave, looked here and there—nothing. Then he found another cave and stuck his flashlight into it and here were the eighteen

wanted terrorist cows sitting there. So he started shouting “Eureka, eureka!” When the military governor arrived, he asked the butcher, if he had enough money to buy eighteen cows, why didn’t he pay his taxes? At that time, the tax revolt was still in process. The law allowed the military to arrest anybody for forty-eight hours who didn’t pay taxes. Then he had to be released, but they could arrest him again. So he started this procedure against the butcher. Forty-eight hours, released for a day, forty-eight hours, released for a day.

So we moved the cows to farms in Beit Sahour and in nearby villages. The cows were distributed at different homes, two in each place. That was less threatening than a single mob of cows, and the governor was finally satisfied that he should stop there.

But three or four years later I was summoned to the headquarters of the regional Israeli civil administration. When I arrived, a man stood to greet me. It was the military governor. He had done well with the cows, so he was promoted very quickly. I didn’t know why I was summoned, but after he finished speaking about all sorts of things, he said, “Ghassan, I want to ask you a question. Where are the cows now?” I couldn’t help but laugh. He was obsessed with the cows even years later.

WE MIGHT BE ANNOYING, BUT WE’RE GOOD-HEARTED PEOPLE

During the first two years of the First Intifada I was in and out of jail. I started getting arrested more and more under administrative detention.[19] I was beaten frequently. I could figure out immediately that they didn’t have enough information to be able to squeeze me. So I didn’t lie, but I didn’t volunteer information. They would detain me for eighteen-day stretches, which was the legal limit at the time before receiving a military charge. Then two days later they would come and arrest me for eighteen days, and then release me.

Finally, the military governor’s assistant wrote me a summons for “day arrest.” I had to sit at the civil administration building from eight in the morning until eight in the evening, and was then released after the Beit Sahour curfew. I had to find my way back to my home from Bethlehem, so if any soldier saw me walking the streets, I might have been shot. It

continued like that for about ten days. All of my brothers were jailed at some point, too. In total, I have been to jail nine times, around four years all together.

I think the Israelis targeted me because I was very successful in bringing attention to the Intifada. In fact, at that time, Israel was upset about the focus on Beit Sahour, because any small activity in Beit Sahour was like a big explosion outside. We managed to do the tax resistance and to convey the image of the Boston Tea Party, and it was covered in the *New York Times*. We also managed to get a United Nations Security Council resolution proposed that called Israel to stop the siege on our town and return all the goods taken in tax seizures. We forced the Americans to use the veto against the proposal. So that was really probably one of the main reasons that I was targeted with those harsh imprisonment measures—they wanted to disrupt this work because it was really annoying to them.

Still, I managed to build relations with the Israeli society, so Beit Sahour became somewhat protected. We had a lower number of casualties because the army couldn't enter Beit Sahour without seeing many foreign and Israeli journalists and activists. I started establishing relations with Israeli peace groups, which have wide connections outside. Then I started working with Palestinians living in the United States and England. When the media focused on me, more people became interested in communicating with me. Suddenly, everybody who wanted to come to Palestine either on a fact-finding mission or in a delegation wanted to meet me. So I began to develop a huge network.

I LOOKED AROUND AND SAW GUNMEN, MILITIAS, TANKS, AND SUICIDE BOMBERS

I was very busy in the years after the First Intifada. My wife and I had a son in 1990. I felt thrilled, happy, and more responsible. I also started working as a physics professor at Birzeit University.[20] And I was trying to carry forward with the sort of resistance we had established in Beit Sahour in the Intifada. I helped to start international outreach organizations such as the Alternative Tourism Group as well as a Palestinian economic development organization. My days were very long. I used to leave home at three in the

morning to have time to answer e-mails for activist organizations I was involved in, and then go teach all day, then more activist work, and I wouldn't come home until midnight. By the late nineties, I was depressed all the time. Nothing much was changing, and I thought we as Palestinians were going in the wrong direction. And my activism was making it hard to spend as much time in my community as I wanted. Then the Second Intifada erupted in 2000, and it was different than the first. Everybody was shooting each other, and I had to reconsider how the principles we put in place in the First Intifada would apply to this new one, which was more violent. I looked around and saw gunmen, militias, tanks, and suicide bombers. What the hell could we do in such an environment? But then I thought, *Why not try something*? I had to find a way to engage. The hardest part of any conflict is when you feel trapped between two powers, waiting to be the victim. In 1970 in Jordan I was in the middle of a conflict, but I was young, so I couldn't engage. So I didn't want to repeat that experience again. So during the Second Intifada I started working with other Palestinian, Israeli, and American activists. We invited people to join what we called at that time International Solidarity Campaigns.[21] It was an experiment.

We started with a very big action that attracted attention to us—we took over an Israeli military camp in Beit Sahour that had been bombarding Palestinian homes. We gathered around a hundred people—Palestinians, some Italians, some Israeli anti-Zionist groups, a German delegation, and a few Canadians, and we marched into the camp. The soldiers were taken by surprise, especially since they saw some Israelis with us. They didn't know what to do. They moved to the back of the camp in order to get away from us. And then a Canadian removed the Israeli flag and put up a Palestinian flag, and we declared the place liberated. After three hours, we left. There was a huge reaction to our demonstration, and we started receiving more requests for people to join in similar protests.

We decided to expand and do a campaign every two weeks. We would remove roadblocks, conduct lie-ins in front of Israeli tanks, and other things like that. We were practicing non-violent protest even in the middle of great violence. I started working with an activist named Neta Golan, and then a month later, Huwaida Arraf and Adam Shapiro came and wanted to join

forces and we started planning for a big campaign. Then someone suggested calling it the International Solidarity Movement, and we thought, *Why not?* Every day I received forty or fifty applications from people who wanted to join. ISM raised no money—everyone paid their own expenses. We started screening people and doing trainings. I think we managed to get around 7,000 internationals to come and take part in the Palestinian struggle. Amazingly, people who were coming were university professors, lawyers, all different ages, not just young people and activists. During the First Intifada, I was jailed a lot. But, during the Second Intifada, I didn't go to jail. I benefitted a lot from the relations I established inside Israel, which provided some protection. There was an attempt within Israel to outlaw the ISM and arrest us all, but I met with members from the Labor Party in Israel and convinced them that the ISM might be annoying, but we were good-hearted people. But even if I was less vulnerable to arrest, we were all exposed to terrible violence. The army tolerated us until about 2003. That year, maybe twenty ISM volunteers reported to us that they'd been subjected to live ammunition fired very close to them. There came a point when it seemed like the soldiers started hunting us and trying to freak us out. And then Rachel Corrie and Tom Hurndall were killed. Brian Avery was shot in the face, but he survived.[22]

The work with ISM was very tough. At different points, we were all, including myself, at risk of dying. I was away from my family all the time—it was a round-the-clock job. There were lots of problems between the activists I had to solve, and I felt responsible for those who died. I trained Rachel Corrie here in Beit Sahour. The hardest part of my life was when I met Rachel's family, her mother and father. They came and had lunch at my home. They are great people and they started assuring me that I did nothing wrong. I faced a hard time with Tom Hurndall's parents at the beginning, but then we became very close friends. His mother is now the development director of Friends of Birzeit University, and she wrote a very powerful book called *My Son Tom*.

I'm proud of the work I've done with ISM and other organizations, but around 2005 or 2006 I suddenly felt that I should stop working with foreigners and Israelis and I should make the journey back to my own community. I'd been focused on reaching out to the world and traveling a

lot since 1987. I was emotionally drained. So in 2006, I told the other co-founders of ISM that I was still with them, but I could no longer do administrative work. I went back to university life and became closer to my students and community. And that's what my life has been for the last ten years. When the time comes, I'll find my way to engage.

When we talk to Ghassan in July 2014, he is skeptical about the possibility of an emergent Third Intifada. He tells us, "I don't see an Intifada happening now. You smell the Intifada, you smell the emotions of people. I don't smell those emotions now. To have an Intifada, either you have glimpses of hope, or you are desperate enough to want to die. The First Intifada, hope moved us. The Second Intifada, desperation moved us."

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[1] Beit Sahour is a city of around 15,000 located just east of Bethlehem. Its population is approximately 80 percent Christian.

[2] The Jabal Al-Hussein camp is located northwest of Amman. It was originally established in 1948 for 8,000 refugees. Today it houses nearly 30,000.

[3] For more on the Bedouins, see the Glossary, page 304.

[4] For more on the Six-Day War, see the Glossary, page 304.

[5] The *keffiyeh* is a head scarf traditionally worn by Arabs. In the late 1960s, it was adopted as a symbol of Palestinian nationalism.

[6] The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan took control of the West Bank following 1948, and it also hosted over 400,000 refugees from the 1948 war. By 1970, approximately 60 percent of the population of the greater Jordanian-controlled territory was Palestinian. In 1970, tensions between the Kingdom of Jordan and representatives of the Palestinian people such as the PLO led to civil war. For more information, see the entry for *Black September* in the Glossary, page 304.

[7] An exit exam for high school. For more on the tawjihi exams, see the Glossary, page 304.

[8] The Lebanese Civil War broke out in 1975 between a number of factions, but especially the PLO and Palestinian refugee militias, Lebanese Muslim militias, and leftist militias on one side and Maronite Christians (with the support of both Israel and Syria) on the other side. The war was partly

precipitated by the arrival of the PLO among the 400,000 Palestinian refugees living in southern Lebanon in 1975. Attempts to drive out the PLO led to massacres in Palestinian refugee camps.

[9] Beirut is the capital of Lebanon and was the site of the most intense fighting during the Lebanese Civil War. Today, it is a city of 361,000.

[10] The Lebanese Phalanges Party is a political party that grew out of a Christian paramilitary force formed in 1936 (a youth brigade inspired by fascist youth brigades in Europe at the time). The Phalangists were a major force in the Lebanese Civil War.

[11] Tel-Al Zaatar was a UNRWA camp in northeast Beirut with around 50,000 Palestinian refugees. Maronite Christian militias sieged and destroyed the camp in August 1976.

[12] Al-Muskubiya ("the Russian Compound") is a large compound in Jerusalem that now houses a major interrogation center and lockup, as well as courthouses and other Israeli government buildings.

[13] The Evangelical Lutheran School of Beit Sahour was established as a co-educational primary school in 1901.

[14] Bethlehem University is a Catholic co-educational school founded in 1973.

[15] Reading University is located in Reading in southern England. It serves over 20,000 students.

[16] The First Intifada was an uprising throughout the West Bank and Gaza against Israeli military occupation. It began in December 1987 and lasted until 1993. *Intifada* in Arabic means "to shake off." For more information, see Appendix I, page 295.

[17] Tal Piyot is a shopping center in Jerusalem. Eilat is a city of 50,000 at the southern tip of Israel. Eilat is an important harbor town on the Red Sea and also a popular resort and travel destination.

[18] A *kibbutz* is a collectively run farm.

[19] For more on administrative detention, see the Glossary, page 304.

[20] Birzeit University is a renowned public university located just outside Ramallah. It hosts approximately 8,500 undergraduates.

[21] The International Solidarity Movement (ISM) was founded by Ghassan Andoni and other Palestinian, Israeli, and American activists in 2001. The organization calls on citizens from around the world to engage in nonviolent protests against the military occupation of Palestine.

[22] Rachel Corrie was an American ISM volunteer who was killed by the Israeli military in Rafah in 2003. She was crushed to death by a bulldozer while trying to defend a Palestinian man's home from demolition. Tom Hurndall was a British photography student who was shot by an Israeli sniper in Rafah in 2003 (after a nine month coma he died in 2004). Brian Avery was an ISM volunteer who was reportedly shot by Israeli soldiers while walking with friends in the West Bank city of Jenin.

JAMAL BAKR AT THE GAZA CITY SEAPORT

JAMAL BAKR

Fisherman, 50
Born in Gaza City, Gaza
Interviewed in Gaza City, Gaza

During our 2013 trip to Gaza, we meet Jamal Bakr twice at the marina where the fishermen dock their boats. On each occasion Jamal is not fishing; instead, he is watching other boats with expensive nets, and the extensive manpower required to use them, as they bring in their hauls of sardines. Jamal has short-cropped grey hair and a trimmed salt and pepper beard. He has a small frame, and he wears black shoes and slacks even though he spends his days amid the muck of the marina.

Approximately 4,000 Gazan fishermen rely on access to the open waters of the Mediterranean to make a living, but the range in which they can travel by boat has been significantly restricted since Israel imposed a naval blockade on Gaza in 2007. Following the Oslo Accords in 1993, Gazans were permitted to travel up to twenty nautical miles in pursuit of large schools of fish. By the time of the Second Intifada in 2000, that range was reduced to twelve nautical miles, and in 2007, after the imposition of the blockade, the range was further limited to six nautical miles (and sometimes three nautical miles).

In 1999, Gazan fishermen harvested 4,000 tons of fish, and their sale represented 4 percent of the total economy of both Gaza and the West Bank. Today, the fishing economy has collapsed, as Gazan fishermen have depleted schools of sardines and other fish in their limited range. Over 90 percent of Gazan fishermen are living in poverty and dependent on international aid for survival. To pursue fish beyond the permitted range

means to risk arrest, the confiscation of fishing boats, or even shooting by the Israeli navy. Some fisherman report being harassed or attacked by the navy even within the permitted fishing zone. According to Oxfam International, an anti-poverty non-profit organization that works in over ninety countries, in 2013 there were 300 reported incidents of border or naval fire against Gazans, and half of those were targeting fisherman at sea.

When we meet, Jamal tells us that he comes from a very long line of fisherman, but that he now relies on international aid to support his family. Since the imposition of the blockade, he can't rely on catching enough fish to provide meals for his family, let alone catching enough to sell at market. He also shares with us the dangers of the Gazan fishing trade—a profession he has no plans to abandon.

MY CHILDREN ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT PEOPLE IN MY LIFE

I was born here in Gaza in May 1964, and I've always lived off of the sea and what it provides. My family takes its job from our ancestors—we've been fishermen since long, long ago. I first went out on a fishing boat with a brother-in-law when I was twelve. I loved it immediately and knew that was what I wanted to do with my life. My father taught me to fish when I was thirteen. I got my own boat when I was sixteen, and I fixed it up until it was in good enough shape to sail in the sea. I've fished now for thirty-five years. I've never done anything else.

I'm very close to the other fishermen. I've worked alongside them for decades, and we see each other more than we see our own families! But my children are the most important people in my life. It used to be that my parents were most important, and now it's my children. I've been married to my wife Waseela for twenty-eight years—we are cousins, and our parents arranged for us to be married. I have eight daughters and one son. We fishermen love to make more and more children because we want sons to help us on the boats. I think of having more children, God knows, but I have to convince my wife! My son Khadeer is eighteen, and he's a fisherman already. He left school after the sixth grade because he wanted to work with me. He's been a full-time fisherman ever since, but he's not old

enough yet to be very reliable. I love my daughters, but it's against tradition for women to be fishermen.

Before the blockade, my family used to go far out into the sea and get amazing amounts of fish.[1] We'd find mostly sardines, but also plenty of mackerel. I could make $500 in a single day sometimes. Fishing around Gaza City was actually better when Gaza was still occupied, since we had more freedom to travel throughout the sea then.[2] But things have been especially difficult with the blockade. Actually, things have been especially bad ever since Gilad Shalit was captured.[3] Before his capture, we used to have access to twelve nautical miles around Gaza City for our fishing boats. But since then, the restrictions have been much tighter. It might change a little, but whether it's three miles or six miles doesn't make much of a difference. We can't find much in those waters—only a few sardines. There are no rocks for bigger schools of fish to live around, since it's mostly only mud in the zone where we're permitted to fish.

When we go out on the sea, we're often in crews of at least three or four. Our boats may be about twenty feet long, with roofs and a closed compartment in the center that we fill with ice and use as a cooler for our catch. We have lights mounted to the roofs of our boats to spot schools of fish in the early morning and late evening, and we use GPS devices so we can return to the best available spots and also make sure we're not crossing the boundaries of the blockade. When we find fish, we have nets we use to bring them in. But these days, it's not so easy to find fish.

Since the blockade, most months I don't make a single penny. It's not only that I don't make money, I even owe the gas station money because it costs a lot to fuel up the boat. Then I don't make anything, so I can't pay. So at the end of the day, most days, I'm losing money. When I do catch fish, I take them to the market behind the marina. But most days there's nothing to sell, so I just sit at the marina with other fishermen. The Gaza seaport—the marina—is pretty much a mile-long strip of concrete where fishermen tie up their boats. There's a gate separating the marina from the rest of the city's shoreline, but not much else there besides a strip of concrete. Recently, a Qatari–Turkish-funded project added some tables and chairs where families can congregate on Thursdays and Fridays. When we get

together at the marina, we mostly talk about the fish we found or didn't find out at sea.

But even when there's not enough fish to sell in the market, I feed my family sometimes with the fish I can catch. We eat a lot of sardines when I can catch them. Mostly for dinner, but sometimes for lunch as well if we've caught enough. We'll grill them or fry them, and always eat them with rice. The best kind of fish I catch is the *denees*.[4] That is a delicious fish.

EVERY SINGLE DAY I EXPECT TO BE KILLED

When I'm out on the water, I'm nervous about being shot. Shootings happen all the time on the water. I have a cousin who got killed a year ago, when he was just going out on the water for fun. He was nineteen, and he'd just gotten engaged. He went out on a Friday with his uncle, and, at the time, the fishing zone was limited to three nautical miles. They might have gone too far out. My cousin didn't do anything wrong, he was just a little out of the restricted area. There was no good reason why he was shot.

I probably see around three Israeli gunboats every day I go out. Usually, they are off in the distance, but sometimes they get quite close. They are about forty feet long, with a crew of twelve or so. Sometimes they'll pull close to a Gazan fishing boat like mine and simply shout curses through a megaphone. When this happens to me, I just pretend like they aren't there. They couldn't hear me if I tried to say anything back, anyway. They have water cannons that they sometimes fire on boats, as well as rockets and machine guns.

Every single day, I hear that someone got shot at. Every single day, I expect to be killed. Whenever I leave my home in the morning, I'm not sure I will get home alive. That is what it's like to be a fisherman in Gaza. I don't know how to keep myself safe, because we don't have time to think of how to protect ourselves when the shooting starts. When the navy starts shooting, a fisherman doesn't even have enough time to put on a life jacket.

The soldiers often shoot for no reason at all. It doesn't have to be because someone went out of the restricted area, like my cousin. It could be because of something else that was happening in Palestine, or the mood of a soldier. Sometimes, if the soldier's girlfriend broke up with him, he comes

and—just because he's angry—he shoots up the fisherman. They keep you guessing. I don't think soldiers who shoot always have a reason, really; they can just do whatever they want without fearing anyone.

In the middle of November 2012, I didn't work at all during the week of bombing.[5] After the cease-fire later in November, I started going out again, and so did my son Khadeer. As part of the cease-fire, we fishermen were supposed to be able to go out up to six miles, so we were all eager to see what we would be able to find in the waters we could now get to.

At that time I had two boats—my old boat that I got at sixteen, and a newer, nicer one with a new motor that I had saved up to buy. Three days after we started fishing again, on November 28, Khadeer went out early in the morning to fish with three of his cousins. They took my new boat out on the water. Later that morning, his cousins showed up at my house. When I saw them, I thought right away that my son had been killed.

My nephews told me that they were fishing out in the sea, about two miles from the marina. There were maybe twenty other boats around fishing in the same area. Suddenly an Israeli gunboat appeared a few hundred feet away. Without warning, the boat fired a missile at my boat's engine and completely disabled it. It caught fire. Nobody was injured, they just destroyed the engine. That was their introduction. Then an Israeli navy guy called to Khadeer and his cousins through a megaphone and told them to strip to their underwear and to jump into the sea, because they were going to blow up the boat. My son jumped in the water, and they hit the boat with another missile and it exploded. After the boat was destroyed, the navy guys began shooting in the water all around where my son and his cousins were swimming. They were all really scared. Then the Israeli boat pulled up and grabbed Khadeer out of the sea. His cousins watched him get handcuffed to the mast of the boat. He was in his underwear, and it was one of the coldest days of the year and very windy on the sea. Khadeer's cousins then swam to another fishing boat, got a lift back to shore, and came to see me.

That morning, I stayed home waiting for news of my son. I thought the police might call with news that he'd been arrested by the Israelis. At some point that morning, friends called to tell me that they'd talked to fishermen who had stayed for a while near the attack on my son. They said he was still

okay, that he was aboard the Israeli boat. But I wasn't even focusing on what my friends were saying, because my heart was about to stop.

Then, a few hours later, around three in the afternoon, Khadeer came back. When I saw him, I felt that I got my soul back. The first thing he said was, "We lost the boat." I told him, "You shouldn't have to worry about the money and the boat. It's fine. As long as I didn't lose you." It became a big huge gathering of friends and family, and everyone was crying.

Later, Khadeer told me that he was handcuffed to the mast of the Israeli gunboat for three hours. Then soldiers refused to take him to shore, because they didn't want their bosses to know what they'd done to him. They didn't have a reason or excuse for it. While he was handcuffed, they fired on another boat. Eventually, they threw him in the sea and told him to get the nearest fishing boat to take him back to shore. Imagine if something bad happened to him—how could you throw him again into the sea without checking to see if he was close to freezing to death? I think if something bad had happened to him, none of them would have ever cared. Maybe they would have said, "It was by mistake."

I felt really lucky because when I lost the $10,000—the value of the boat—I felt like I'd lost money, but then I got compensated with millions of dollars by getting my son back. I told Khadeer, "Don't think of it. Don't worry about it. This just happens." I didn't want to let him feel too scared by the experience. He started fishing again after one week. By now, my family is used to the nature of this work. When we go to the sea, they know—my son and I are either going to be back home in the evening or we'll be killed. So we all live with this fact.

I feel really disappointed because my life is always in danger, and it's not even for any good reason. It's not for a good thing at the end of the day. Before the blockade, I used to face many hardships, but it was for something good, because I used to make a good income. But now I'm sacrificing my life for nothing. Now I have a dead heart. I don't care about shooting, or anything that comes to me. If anyone starts to feel a bit weepy about their lives, they shouldn't go out on the water.

The important thing is that I have Khadeer back, but the attack has totally affected my life, because the boat that we lost was the new one, and it had a good motor. Now I have only the older boat. Now I'm using my friend's motor because I don't have enough funds for my own.

Even this old boat is at risk. Another worry that fisherman have is boat seizures. The Israelis find all sorts of reasons to seize boats. Then they'll tell the fisherman that his boat will be returned, and it never is. Sometimes I think that Israel is financially fighting Palestinians in Gaza. Because they seize boats for reasons that have nothing to do with security issues, reasons that have more to do with fighting people and their source of income. Sometimes I think if they see a fisherman trying to haul in a huge amount of fish, they keep shooting until he leaves everything behind and runs. So the main target is to control what financial benefits people can get out of the sea.

It's really hard now to support my family through fishing. It's really bad. Before, I used to donate money to charity. But now I'm living on international aid. It's only because of this that I can survive. We get some support from CHF, but it's not money. It's just flour and oil.[6] I could make $500 a day before, and now I haven't made anything for a month. If I could make even $30 in a day, that would be an incredible day of fishing. But I never feel discouraged. I'm always hoping for the best.

I owe a lot of money to a lot of people. I've borrowed from family and friends. People don't hassle me about it yet, but I feel the pressure whenever I see them. Since the incident of the boat, I don't sleep much, only two hours a day. I didn't sleep at all last night. How would I sleep knowing everyone wants money from me? And, more than this, I wake up in the morning and I'm not sure I'll be able to feed my children. So it's becoming complicated, and it's affecting me and my state of mind because I'm not feeling fine. Still, I never thought of getting any other job because I feel like I'm a fish. If I leave the sea, then I will die.

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[1] Israel's blockade of the Gazan ports began in 2007, partly in response to Hamas taking power in the Gaza Strip. Egypt also formally restricted its borders with Gaza at the time. For more information, see Appendix I, page 295.

[2] Gaza was fully administered by Israel from the end of the 1967 war until the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993. Israeli settlers and the Israeli military continued to occupy parts of Gaza until September 2005, when Israel evacuated all settlers from the strip and withdrew military forces. For more information, see Appendix I, page 295.

[3] Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit was captured in 2006. He was released as part of a prisoner exchange in 2011. For more information, see Appendix I, page 295.

[4] *Denees* is the gilt-headed bream, often called *dorade* in U.S. markets.

[5] Israel targeted Gaza with bombings during eight days starting on November 14, 2012, during what it termed Operation Pillar of Defense. For more information, see Appendix I, page 295.

[6] Cooperative Housing Foundation (CHF) is an international aid non-profit now known as Global Communities. Following the air strikes of 2012, Global Communities began distributing food to 47,500 Gazans in partnership with the United Nations.

MAN PRUNING OLIVE TREE

FADI SHIHAB

Computer technician, 34
Born in Kuwait City, Kuwait
Interviewed in Gaza City, Gaza

In 2012, Fadi Shihab made an unusual decision: he chose to move his family from Knoxville, Tennessee, to Gaza City, despite heightened tensions between Israel and Hamas at the time. Up to that point, he had only visited Gaza once.

Fadi emigrated to the United States from Kuwait when he was thirteen years old, but his parents were originally from Gaza City. After marrying in the early sixties, his parents had moved to Syria, where his father pursued teaching work. They were there during the Six-Day War—when Israel began its military occupation of Gaza—and because they were not registered as living within Gaza at the time of Israel's initial census of the region, many were unable to return and claim residency rights. They were left stateless, without permission to even visit their extended families. The Shihabs' exile lasted decades, during which time they lived in Egypt, Syria, Kuwait, and the United States. But ties of family and culture were strong enough to pull Fadi's parents back to Gaza when they finally had the opportunity to return in the late 2000s.

We meet Fadi multiple times in 2013, mostly at the property he inherited from his father in the Zeitoun neighborhood of Gaza City. He's tall, and speaks English with a truly interesting accent—Arabic inflections mixed with a Tennessee drawl. He has a four-story house and a garden with olive and lemon trees covering almost two acres. As we sit in the shade of his garden, Fadi explains the reasons why he left a lucrative job and

comfortable home in Tennessee to move his family to a city where electricity is only available for a few hours most days and the threat of war is always present.

WE WERE STATELESS

My parents are from Gaza. My dad was born in 1941, and both his family and my mother's family have been here forever. After the war in 1948, refugees from all over Palestine came to Gaza, and it was administered by Egypt.[1] Even in the early sixties it was hard to find work in Gaza, so after my parents were married, they moved to Egypt and then to Syria. My dad was a math teacher.

During the war in 1967, Israel occupied Palestine. Not long after the occupation began, Israel took a census in the West Bank and Gaza, and any Palestinians who weren't living in Palestine at the time weren't allowed back in. Without the ID cards Israel issued after the war, my parents were no longer considered by Israel to be legal occupants of Gaza. So they were stateless, and they moved from country to country on visas—from Syria to Saudi Arabia to Kuwait. During this time, my father continued to teach, and my parents started having kids. I'm the youngest. My oldest brother was born in 1965, and then they had four girls, a boy, and then I was born in Kuwait City in December 1979.[2]

A couple of years after I was born, my oldest brother, Alim, got a student visa to study in the U.S. Meanwhile, my father taught in schools in Kuwait City, and I grew up playing with my siblings, making a lot of friends, and going to school.

Then in 1990, when I was ten years old, Saddam Hussein decided to take over Kuwait.[3] A year later, the U.S. came in and kicked him out. I remember the war as being kind of an exciting time, as scary as it was. We were living in an apartment building with four floors, four apartments per floor. I'd go to the roof with my friend across the hall, and we'd watch the lights of missiles in the distance. We thought it was so cool, and we thought the U.S. soldiers looked cool—they even wore sunglasses! They were especially cool compared to the Iraqi soldiers, who were dressed in torn-up

rags for uniforms. From the roof we'd watch the fighting on the border in the distance, and we called the U.S. *Al-Hakim*, "the ruler." We had a lot of respect for the U.S. during the war. The whole neighborhood would sleep together in shelters every night, which, as kids, we thought of as a lot of fun.

Of course, it was a scary time. My dad had to find food for us, and some days he'd have to drive out of the city to do that. One day he went out looking for food, and he didn't come home. We were terrified and thought he'd been captured or killed. But he came home after three weeks, and it turns out he'd been stopped by the Iraqi army, and they'd forced him to transport the corpse of an Iraqi soldier back to the soldier's family. The story of how he got back to Kuwait City is too long to tell.

For our family, life in Kuwait became hard after the war. Yasser Arafat supported Saddam, and so Kuwaitis sort of thought of Palestinians as traitors.[4] In fact, a lot of Palestinians living in Kuwait fled to Iraq after the war. We tried to stay, but my dad couldn't get our visas renewed because there was so much hostility. He'd had no trouble for fifteen years in Kuwait, but now we had to find somewhere else to live. And that's when we emigrated to the U.S.

AFTER SIX MONTHS I FELT LIKE I FIT IN PRETTY WELL

I first came to the States on July 11, 1992. I was twelve, and I came with my parents, one older brother, and my sister who is a year older than me. Three of my sisters had already married or were studying, and one lived in Iraq, one in Sudan, and one in Libya. We moved to Knoxville, Tennessee. My brother Alim, who had gone to school in Kansas, had since moved to Knoxville for grad school. We moved in with Alim when we first arrived, and then we found a place of our own. My dad used his life savings, about $50,000, to buy a house straight-up in cash. He didn't believe in getting a mortgage, since he wasn't sure he'd get a job. But he found a gig at Wendy's flipping burgers. It was a little embarrassing for me, since I was used to him being this respected math teacher, but he'd say, "As long as I'm working, there's nothing to be ashamed of." My second oldest brother, Tawfiq, who was nineteen, he got a job at Wendy's too and eventually

became my dad's boss. That was a little strange. But my father wasn't committed to staying in the U.S., and he didn't pick up the language very well.

I don't remember much from the first months in the States, other than that they were really bad. Just the language barrier—I spoke no English. And people were different than what I was used to. Even their jokes were different. In the fall I started going to middle school. The administration made me stay back a year—they placed me in the seventh grade, just because of the language barrier. It was difficult in school at first. One middle school teacher, his name was Mr. Jones, I remember him telling me, "You're very good in math." And I didn't even know enough English to really know what he was saying to me, if he was complimenting me or what. But math is like a universal language, right? It was the only subject I was good at.

I'd say it took maybe three to six months before my siblings and I started grasping the basics of the language. The good thing in the U.S. is that they had these English as a second language classes, so over time we just kind of picked it up, and English just started to flow. After six months, we were making new friends. My teachers saw me progressing so well within the first year that they moved me to eighth grade, where I belonged based on my age.

My sister Adiba and I, we were much better than my other brothers and sisters at speaking English. Adiba's just a year older than me, and the two of us don't even have much of an accent when we speak English. My older brother Tawfiq, he was nineteen when we moved. So for him, his Arabic tongue is still heavy, since he didn't go to high school in the States. I'd say definitely, the younger you are, the easier it is.

After that first six months, I began to feel like I fit in pretty well, and I made some friends. I had an Iranian friend, Hamdi, who had the same story as me. He came to the U.S. when he was about ten or eleven years old. He speaks Persian, and I can't speak that, so we'd only communicate in English. Then there were a couple of Russian guys and a couple of Romanian guys. We just kind of clicked, because all of us were immigrants. We didn't dress the right way to fit in—we all dressed like we were just off the boat. We spoke broken English, so in a way we all understood each other best. I also got to meet the Americans around my neighborhood. I

think the Americans I made friends with saw me as kind of weird—they hadn't known anybody with a background like mine. Knoxville isn't like Chicago, or New York, or San Francisco—some cities in the U.S. have had Arabs since the 1800s, 1900s. The Arab community hasn't been there long. But I got to know some of the kids who were from Knoxville, and I watched some of my friends running around with the American kids, doing good things or bad things. But I just kind of moved with the groove. My friends and I went to Riverwood High School—that's also in Knoxville—and then I was done with that and I went to the University of Tennessee.

At the same time, my parents were working on getting U.S. citizenship. What they really wanted more than anything was to go back to Gaza, to see the family they'd been away from for thirty years. My dad passed the citizenship exam first, and once he got a U.S. passport, he was finally able to get back into Gaza. So in 1997 he moved back there. He built a house on some property he inherited from his father—a couple of acres with some olive, lemon, and fig trees—and he got it ready for my mom to move there too. It was weird to us kids, and we wanted him to stay. But it was his life's dream to go back to his home, to sit under the olive trees in the breeze. Or sit around a fire at night with his brothers and drink coffee. That's what he always talked about. He always said he didn't want to die outside Gaza. My mom failed the citizenship test a few times, so she stayed back in the U.S. for a couple more years. We'd see my dad only when he came back to the States to visit us for three or four months every year.

I ALWAYS HAD A RED LINE IN MY HEAD THAT I WOULDN'T CROSS

At the University of Tennessee I studied business information systems. I was interested in computers, because during my junior and my senior year in high school, I was working at Comcast, an internet provider. So I was already into solving internet problems and whatnot. My two older brothers studied computer science and computer languages, and they told me, "Try to do something different than us." I took some computer language courses, but also I got into IT hardware.

During this time I was still hanging out with my friend Hamdi. Hamdi and I, when we hung out, sometimes we'd hang out with some of our American friends, sometimes we'd hang out just with each other. Sometimes we'd do the same things Americans did and go to bars and stuff like that. And then at the end of the day, sometimes we just liked to talk to each other, listen to some Arabic music or Persian music.

Sometimes we'd be with our friends from other countries, like Alex, the guy from Romania who we went to high school with. We always asked each other, "Do you guys feel like Americans, do you feel *American*?" Hamdi would say, "Well, basically we're Americans, but we have an advantage because we come from a different culture, so we can enjoy that culture and we can enjoy this culture." So it's hard to explain, but being both Palestinian and American felt like an advantage. Politically, I'm American, but in terms of culture, heritage, I'm Palestinian.

When I finished school I was about twenty-one. I graduated on May 12, 2001. My friends and I wanted to celebrate, so we were like, "Where do we want to go? Somewhere special!" We drove to a casino in Paducah, Kentucky. It's like four hours away from Knoxville. We had a blast. So that May, June, and July we'd go back to Paducah almost every two weeks. Growing up, I always had a red line in my head that I wouldn't cross. Like, *I'm gonna do some things that are bad—I'm gonna drink, I'm gonna go to casinos and gamble, do this and that, but there are some things I'm not gonna do, like drugs.* I don't know why I was like that, how I developed those boundaries, but I figured it had to be because I was raised partly in Kuwait and not in the U.S. for my whole childhood.

I WAS LOOKING FOR A SWEETNESS INSIDE

In July of 2001, I started working for a temp company, and then I got hired at IBM in November. While I started working at IBM, I was also working toward citizenship. I was twenty-three when I became a U.S. citizen. Of course, I had to take the citizenship tests and everything, but it wasn't that bad. The questions were like, "How many states are there?" I think they wanted me to name the thirteen colonies and the governor of my state and the two senators from our state, that sort of thing.

Then I got my passport, and that was really nice. In 2004 I left America, I took a leave of absence from work. By this time, all my siblings and I had grown up and left the house, and my mother had U.S. citizenship too, so she was ready to move back to Gaza and be with my dad. I was considering it too, actually. I was interested to find out what Gaza was all about. I'd heard so many stories growing up.

I traveled with my parents, and we first went to visit one of my older sisters who was living in Saudi Arabia at the time. Then we went to Kuwait, to see my old neighborhood. I still had a special feeling in my heart for it. I saw the guys I used to know there, and the situation was so bad. People had graduated from college, but they had nothing to do—like, no jobs. I was just like, *Man, I'm glad I went to America*. And I had other advantages from being a U.S. citizen. Maybe most Americans don't think about using a U.S. passport to travel, but for me it was like a way to go to wherever I wanted. 'Cause as an American, you know that you tell the American embassy that you're going to Gaza or Saudi Arabia or wherever, and you just go. If I'd been a Kuwaiti citizen, I would have had a lot of trouble getting across some borders. So it was nice, just the freedom of traveling with a U.S. passport.

Then I was in Gaza for about six weeks. I got to see my dad's family, got to know them a little and stay in his house. I met some of his friends, too. My dad had a friend who was a teacher with him in Kuwait. After Kuwait, the friend moved to Yemen for a few years and then moved to Gaza. My dad ran into this friend one day while we were visiting Gaza, and the friend invited us to his house.

So we got to his house, and I met his daughter, Houda. I'd actually known her from Kuwait, but I didn't remember much—she was a few years younger than me. After we left their house, my dad was like, "You saw Houda, what do you think?" I just said, "I'm not sure." At that time, the idea of getting married was in my head. I was twenty-three, I had my own house in the States, I was somewhat stable financially, I had paid off my student loans and all that. But I wasn't sure I wanted to find a girl from Gaza, someone who thinks differently about life, someone who listens to different music, has different values—just everything could be different and it could be a bad fit. I really thought of myself as Palestinian, but maybe a little more American than Palestinian.

Then a week passed and I said, “Okay, let’s give them a call.” The reason I kind of tilted toward seeing her again was that she already had three brothers in the U.S., and she’d already lived in Kuwait, so she wasn’t completely unaware of the world outside Gaza. Plus I thought that her experience with Arab life could be a good thing for kids we might have—she could really teach them some of our Arabic culture when I might not be able to, just because I had lived so much in a Western country.

My dad told his friend that I was interested in meeting his daughter, and so we went back to visit a week later. At Houda’s house, the two of us went into kind of like a private room, but with the door open of course. We chatted. It was weird, because I never really—she was nothing like the American girls I knew. All my life, I’ve talked to boys and girls, no problem. But it was weird being in a room with a girl like Houda. I didn’t know what to talk about. She asked me some questions, I asked her some questions. Just small talk. I think we both left smiling.

Then soon after our talk, I asked her brother to come with us on a date to the sea. Her brother was there as a chaperone. Even though our conversation was limited because her brother was there, we felt a connection. We ended up going to the beach together every day, and even went swimming together, which made her mom go crazy. That was scandalous to her mom—she thought that was so inappropriate. Houda and I were really starting to feel comfortable together, though.

During that time that we were courting, one of the things I was trying to understand was her sensibility, and I was looking for something genuine. I wanted to know if she was one of those girls who maybe just wanted to leave Gaza. Some girls might just be thinking, *Hey, this guy’s a U.S. citizen!* I was looking for a sweetness inside, like a smile that’s too sweet to be fake. And I saw that, I saw something genuine in her. And she was pretty smart, too. She was getting a computer science degree, so we had that in common.

So before I left Gaza, I proposed. She said yes, and her parents agreed. She was still in college, and they wanted her to finish that first. We had the engagement party in Gaza before I left. It was on the beach, and we had all of our families there and we ate and danced. And then a year and three months later, in September 2005, she came to the U.S. and we were married in Knoxville.

YOU DON’T ENTER HEAVEN UNLESS YOU ARE UNDER YOUR MOM’S FEET

For my wife, I think it was really easier for her to adjust to life in the U.S. than it is for many people, because she had somebody from here to help her out. She didn’t have to deal with feeling like an outsider, a weirdo, as much as I did when I came as a kid. And she loved the U.S. right away. She fell in love with the way people were just friendly to her. Even strangers would smile and say, “Good morning!” She said it was so different from Gaza, where everyone was unhappy and people you’d run into on the street were just rude. America seemed like a happy island to her—a bubble where people weren’t affected by any bad things happening in the world. Plus we had a nice house in Knoxville, and I got my job back at IBM so we had a good income and didn’t have too many worries.

We traveled some after we were married, and then we had our first child, our son Azhar, in January 2007. Later that same year, she got pregnant again, and it was going to be a boy. I called my dad, and told him I was going to name my second son after him. But before my second son Iyad was born, in January 2008, my father passed away.

I wasn’t even able to go to the funeral—I flew to Israel, but the Erez crossing was closed at the time because of the war with Hamas, and I couldn’t get in.[5] I was glad I got to tell him about my son, at least. Then we had one more child, my daughter Nada in 2009.

Houda got a master’s degree from University of Tennessee—a teaching certificate. And we were so busy, way too busy for me to go back and visit my mother right away after my father’s death. I really wanted to, though, especially to help settle his estate. But still, we were becoming more and more involved in the Palestinian community in Knoxville, even though it was small. You just end up meeting these other families, and there were about twenty-eight families in the city that would get together sometimes. We’d talk about what was happening in Gaza and the West Bank, share food, talk. I started to become a better Muslim, too. I stopped drinking after I got married, and I read the Quran. And I started to want my kids to have a closer connection to the Arabic world. I wanted to pass along Arabic language and culture to them. And frankly, I was worried about them

growing up in the States and getting pulled into some of the stuff I saw as a teenager—drugs and gangs, that sort of thing. I thought having a closer connection to Arabic culture could help keep them away from that stuff. I think my time in Kuwait helped me develop some boundaries, even though I drank and did other things as a kid.

Finally, in 2010, I flew to Gaza to stay for a week and a half. I was shocked to see how my mom was living—she was so alone. She had a couple of cousins, but nobody to really look after her, and she was seventy-two. I was like, *Man, it isn't right for her to live by herself like this for so many years*. But she didn't want to come back to the U.S. She said, "I will have nothing to do there. I want to die here, just like him." And she wanted me to stay. She wanted her family around her. It really bothered me. In Islam, there's a saying that you don't enter heaven unless you're under your mom's feet. It's a weird saying, but it basically means that your mom really has to be pleased with you when she dies for you to get into heaven.

And so I went back home, and I told my wife, "Listen, you know I've been at IBM almost ten years, and I don't want to let it go. Nobody does this, but I really feel like the right decision is to return to Gaza for a while. I have to do it for my mom. I can't live with myself if my mom dies and I'm not there." And Houda said, "You have two older brothers, let them help her out." My oldest brother, he was in Houston, he had kids who were about to go into college. He couldn't just leave his job. And my other brother, in Florida, he was a citizen, but his wife wasn't, and he was applying for her citizenship—he couldn't just throw all that away. And Houda was like, "Okay, fine, fine. I'm not sure this is the right decision, but I understand." I said, "It's probably not the right decision! I don't know if I'm gonna find a job there. I don't know how people think there, what their attitude will be." There's another saying in Arabic—you have to leave your destiny up to God sometimes, and just whatever happens, happens. And however bad it was going to get in Gaza, I couldn't imagine being fifty, sixty years old one day and thinking, *I wish I had gone to Gaza and helped out my mom*.

I also thought, *This is good for my kids. My kids are gonna learn Arabic, they're gonna be able to read the Quran*. Because if I stayed in the States another twenty years, yeah, I'm gonna be well off, my house paid off, everything fine, but it's not worth anything to me if my kids can't speak

to me in Arabic, you know. So after considering my kids, I thought, *Screw it. I wanna do this for two, three years—what's the worst that can happen?*

GAZANS ACT LIKE BOMBINGS ARE A NORMAL PART OF LIFE

We came here in April 2012. My sons Azhar and Iyad were five and six, and my daughter Nada was three. It was a big adjustment for our family. But in some ways it was a bigger change for Houda than for me. You have to understand, she came from a family of Palestinian refugees in Gaza. Her family lived in Ashkelon before 1948, so they didn't really consider Gaza home.[6] For my wife, she felt like she'd finally found a home in the States, and she wasn't crazy about being back in Gaza. But we settled into the house that my dad had bought and my mom was still living in, which was in the Zeitoun neighborhood in the south of Gaza City.[7] My mom lived on the first floor, then there was a family renting on the second, and we moved in on the third floor, and there's another family on the fourth floor.

We moved to Gaza at a really interesting time. It was calm when we arrived, but it still felt like a dangerous place. The second month after I came here, my cousin had an injury, and he had to go to Egypt for an operation. He came back dead because they botched the operation. But there aren't any good hospitals in Gaza at all, so he had to make the trip. There's one hospital in Gaza City called *Shifa*, which means "get well" in Arabic. But its nickname is *Maut*—"death." It's terrible. You know a hospital's bad when there are feral cats running around inside, and that's what Shifa looks like.

Then in November of that year, Ahmed Al-Jabari, the guy in charge of the Qassam rockets, got assassinated.[8] I started hearing things like, "Hamas is gonna really have to retaliate for this." Everyone knew something was gonna happen. So after that we saw eight days of bombing.[9] At first it was kind of further away, but then they started hitting areas in the Zeitoun neighborhood where I live, and east of my neighborhood, where there are a lot of militia bases and spots where militias launch rockets. You don't see the militias, but they're around you. Even right around where we live, they come and set up rockets and shoot from here. I wouldn't be surprised if

there were missiles buried under these olive trees on our land. Seriously. The militias look for any open spaces they can shoot rockets from.

It was a scary time, and I remember my daughter Nada running back and forth in the apartment when she heard bombs. She couldn't understand what was going on. I'd look at her and I'd think, *Man, I really hope this doesn't affect her psychologically as she grows up.* Because you hear so many horror stories about kids losing their hearing, and you hear stories about how kids get their legs cut off, or kids that become mentally ill.

On the seventh day or eighth day, the F-16s mowed down a building about a quarter mile from here. They shot it up with machine gun fire, and my building and every other building in the neighborhood shook with the impact. An Israeli missile put a giant crater in the ground not far from our home, and that really scared us too. So during the seven or eight days, there were moments where I would be thinking, *Man, did I make the right decision here?* And I would be with my mom downstairs, and she would be scared too. And then we started hearing the news about how if you're a U.S. citizen and you want to leave, give a call to a certain number. I didn't. I thought, *I'm gonna hang on, I'm gonna hang around.*

I would be so scared during those strikes. I remember once or twice after a bombing, an hour or two after it calmed down, I would go outside and I would see my cousins at the corner, just chilling, you know. I was like "Hey, what are you guys doing out here?" And one of my cousins would be like, "Hey, this is nothing, man—just don't walk too far east right now and you'll be okay." So to them it wasn't a big deal, but I sensed that's just the attitude—*Hey, I'm not scared*—but at heart you cannot *not* be scared when you hear these bombs and the building you live in starts shaking. This was like Hollywood action—it was just crazy.

But a lot of Gazans just act like it's a normal part of life. There's a lot of pressure on men here to be strong. Like the kids in the street, when you're driving a car, you might honk the horn to get them to move out of the street, and they're like, "No, you move!" Little kids have the mentality that they're grown men, and that can't be healthy.

I FEEL MY DAD'S PRESENCE

I admit my decision to move my family to Gaza is kind of strange. I mean, anybody here who's well educated, when I tell them my story, they're like, "Man, what are you doing here? Really. What are you *doing* here?"

I've had trouble finding work. I figured if I had some type of 9-to-5 job, no matter how much it paid, at least I'd feeling like I'm being productive. But I still haven't found one. I'm not gonna lie, coming to this situation after so many years having a solid job, it brings on depression sometimes. Sometimes the stress is so much that I'll smoke a pack of cigarettes in a night.

I'm responsible for Houda and the children. Anything happens to them, it's my fault. It's a lot of pressure. I've got gray hair. My brothers see my pictures and they're like, "What happened to you?!" I say, "Man, a year in Gaza is like five years in the U.S.!" I had some gray hair when I arrived in Gaza, but in the last year it just started going completely gray. It's a tough life here.

But I think the kids are comfortable. That's why I think that I really did the best thing for them by bringing them here young. I don't even remember when I was four or five years old, maybe I remember seven and eight. So that's why I figured if I bring them here now, it's gonna be easier. Harder on me, but easier for them. If I bring them here when they're eight or nine, they're gonna want breakfast cereal, they're gonna want everything U.S. style.

I also think that coming here has made me feel closer to my Palestinian identity. Just 'cause when I sit with my cousins, they tell me these stories about my grandfather, about my dad while he was here. They also tell me stories about Hamas, about Fatah, what happened with them. All the crazy things that have happened in the city.

I wasn't with my dad when he died. But when I'm fixing these olive trees and the garden, I feel I'm near him. I'll just feel his presence, and I'll sit down under the trees in the cool air. The breeze comes in from the sea, and it's real nice. I can kind of sense what he wanted to get back to by returning here.

MY WIFE WANTS TO LEAVE FOR GOOD

Things are still so hard here. Recently, the electricity schedule changed, so we'd have about six hours of power, twelve hours without in a cycle. It was like that for about a month and a half. Propane gas got really scarce. We use it for cooking, heating, but people were buying it up to run their cars, because gasoline shipments from Egypt got cut off. So it was a rough couple of months, but what are you gonna do? Then there was all the rain and the flood—we were fine because we're on high ground, but so many people we know who live more in the middle of the city were completely flooded, with raw sewage in their houses. Life in Gaza, it's full of surprises.

And Houda, she doesn't have anyone keeping her here. Her father is in the States now. He's actually ill and being treated in Cleveland. He had a stroke, and he's seventy-five. My wife wants desperately to go back and visit her father, but we can't get her out of Gaza at the moment. The border crossing situation is horrible. We contacted the U.S. embassy to get them to help us go through the Erez crossing, but they wouldn't do it. Their attitude was that they'd warned U.S. citizens not to travel to Gaza, and so getting stuck here is our fault.

It's rare for people to get out through Erez, but the Rafah crossing into Egypt is shut down now, too. It's been opened and closed off and on, but it's been closed the last few months. To go through, you have to apply first. To apply, you have to go to an office that's basically like the DMV, but you have to get there at four in the morning and wait in a line that's got hundreds of people. Then after five hours in line, you register to cross on a specific day. But when that day comes and you go to the Rafah crossing, they might just say, "Sorry, border's closed today. Try again later!" And then you have to start the whole application process over again.

When you go to the Rafah crossing, it's amazing. There are hundreds of people waiting for the crossing to open again. Many of them are sick, and they need to get out for medical treatment. Some people have died waiting at the crossing. And then I worry about my wife's safety, even when we do get her across. Egypt isn't very stable right now, and that four- or five-hour trip from Rafah to Cairo is dangerous. We've heard of hijackings, kidnappings of people on that road.

But my wife really wants to leave for good. Her brother left the capital a few months ago, so she doesn't really have any family in Gaza. I always tell her, "I feel for you. Just be patient. Just a couple of more years, let the kids

get some Arabic in them." But I don't know, sometimes it gets just really frustrating for her. One day, she told me, "You see your cousins every day, you laugh with them. You have a social life, but me, I'm just here, at the house with nothing." I said, "I know it's a sacrifice, but look at the benefits. Your kids knowing Arabic, reading and writing—God will give you rewards for that." I mean, I don't consider myself a conservative Muslim, but I'm a Muslim, you know, and I believe in the Quran. I believe in the message of Muhammad. And she told me, "Yeah, but even the kids, they're not learning the best habits here in Gaza." I thought about that, and I remembered something that had happened a few days before. I said, "You know, a little while ago I was telling Azhar that it was the anniversary of the day my dad died. And he was like, 'Oh, God forgives all the dead people.' He said it in Arabic, and it made me cry." I would never imagine him saying that in the U.S., in English. I told her, "Let's spend a little more time here, then we can call it quits. At least they will have a base of culture to build on."

I don't know what the future holds, really, or where we'll move. I've been to Austin, and I like the way the city is small but big at the same time. So we might move to Austin. We'd be about three and a half hours away from Houston, from my older brother, so I'd be closer to him. On the other hand, I might go to Dubai to see if I can find a job there. Because I think for the kids it'd be better in Dubai than in the States—they'd be speaking Arabic. And I'd still be close to my mom.

Throughout the spring of 2014, Fadi and his family sought a way to leave Gaza, but were unsuccessful due to border closures with Israel and Egypt. U.S. authorities refused to help. Then, on July 8, Israel launched the early stages of the bombing and ground assault in Gaza that the Israeli military called Operation Protective Edge. On July 10, the U.S. consulate in Jerusalem issued an emergency message to U.S. citizens in Gaza offering assistance in leaving. Fadi quickly provided all the needed information to the consulate, and a consular representative told him to be ready to leave immediately.

However, Fadi's wife Houda was in her third trimester of pregnancy, and in the early morning hours of July 11 she went into labor. Just after two

in the morning, Fadi helped his wife into the family car and made his way to Al-Quds Hospital in Gaza City.

Fadi tells us by e-mail, "My car lights [were] the only lights in the streets" due to power being out across Gaza City. "It was like telling the Israelis, please shoot me. [We heard] bombs going off to [our] left and right. But I was scared to speed up [because] I didn't want to look like I was running away." Houda gave birth that morning, but supplies were running short at the private Al-Quds hospital, so Fadi was forced to drive through the darkness a second time to Shifa Hospital to get glucose for his wife. The couple was able to return home safely with their newborn daughter later the same day. "[That] night was the most scared I'd ever been," Fadi says.

In the early morning hours of July 13, the U.S. consulate called Fadi to let him know that some Gazan residents with foreign passports would be allowed through Erez crossing that day, and that he should bring his family to a rendezvous point in Gaza City. His family would be escorted across the Erez crossing into Israel and on to Jordan. Fadi brought his wife and children to the rendezvous point, but he decided to stay in Gaza City himself —at least until the military invasion was over. He wanted to ensure his mother's safety, and he also wanted to wait until government offices opened again so that he could obtain a birth certificate for his newborn daughter and school records for his boys. His wife and children made it to Amman, Jordan. They waited there for two weeks until the newborn was medically authorized to board a plane. In the final week of July, Fadi's family flew to the United States. They ultimately relocated to Ohio, where Houda's father was receiving medical care.

Fadi stayed on in his mother's apartment. "There are so many sad stories here," he tells us. "I feel like a hypocrite for wanting to leave, but I have to be with my family. Thank God my family left. Remember our [garden]? It looks like a desert now because of all the bombs that hit it. People are dying. Some families [are] leaving their elderly behind to get to safety. There is no water. The situation is getting very dire. People here feel like nobody cares about them. God help us here in Gaza."

[1] Approximately 750,000 Palestinians were displaced between 1947 and 1949, and many of them came to Gaza, which was administered by Egypt following armistice agreements in 1949. The migration of refugees dramatically altered the demographics of the Gaza Strip. Today, nearly 75 percent of the 1.7 million people living in Gaza are refugees or descendants of refugees, roughly 1.2 million people. For more information, see Appendix I, page 295.

[2] Kuwait City is the capital of Kuwait. With a population of over 2.4 million in the greater metropolitan area, it is the largest city in Kuwait and is considered a global financial hub.

[3] Iraq invaded Kuwait City in August 1990. Coalition forces led by the U.S. military drove the Iraqi military from Kuwait in February 1991 during Operation Desert Storm.

[4] Yasser Arafat was the leader of the Palestine Liberation Organization, the coalition of militias and political parties that would establish the Palestinian Authority after the signing of the Oslo Accords. He supported Iraq during the invasion of Kuwait despite some strong disagreement within the PLO and opposition to the invasion from many other Arab states such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

[5] The strikes that the Israeli military named Operation Cast Lead took place between December 2008 and January 2009. For more information, see the Glossary, page 304.

[6] Ashkelon is a coastal city of approximately 120,000 people and is located in Israel, around twelve miles north of Gaza.

[7] Zeitoun was a suburb of Gaza City built in the 1930s, but it became a densely populated urban zone after thousands of refugees settled the area following the Arab-Israeli War in 1948. It is known as the former home of Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, the founder of Hamas, who was killed in an air strike in 2004. Yassin's assassination is widely credited for the rise in the popularity of Hamas in Gaza, leading to its 2006 electoral wins.

[8] Ahmed Al-Jabari was a leader of the military wing of Hamas, the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades. He had led military operations during Hamas's assertion of power in Gaza in 2007 and may have helped plan the capture of Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit. He was also credited with acquiring Qassam rockets, which were launched from Gaza into Israel throughout the 2000s. He was killed by an Israeli air strike on November 14, 2012.

[9] This was the series of Israeli air strikes on Gaza in November 2012, called Operation Pillar of Defense. For more information, see the Glossary, page 304.

MAN BRINGING LIVESTOCK THROUGH TUNNELS INTO GAZA

WAFA AL-UDAINI

NGO worker, 26
Born in Deir Al-Balah, Gaza
Interviewed in Gaza City, Gaza

When we first meet, Wafa tells us that her goal is to correct the stereotypical images permeating western media about Palestinian people. Standing in her small office in a dingy building in the middle of Gaza City, this seems like a daunting task, but it's one she is clearly passionate about. She is a small, poised woman with boundless energy wearing a white niqab that covers her head and face. Working with a group of other young men and women, she puts together videos to send to universities around the world featuring ordinary Gazans explaining their hopes and dreams. She also runs a Facebook page, does regular interviews with the media, and has a wide network of friends around the world. She speaks simply but powerfully in English. When asked about the water quality, she bursts into laughter and asks if we've tried to wash our hair with it yet. Wafa manages to retain her sense of humor, despite Gaza's many deprivations.

Movement of people and goods between Israel and Gaza has been restricted since at least the First Intifada. However, Gaza in the 1990s maintained strong economic and administrative ties to both Israel and the West Bank. Thousands of workers passed through the Erez border crossing from northern Gaza into Israel every day. Travel between Gaza and the West Bank was possible for many Palestinians, even if a bit of a bureaucratic hassle. All of that changed in 2000 at the start of the Second Intifada. Israel began closing the borders to Gaza in what it claims was a response to rocket attacks and suicide bombings. It also destroyed Gaza's

only airport. In 2001, Israel began the construction of a massive barrier wall around the entire Gaza Strip and set up a military buffer zone around the perimeter of Gaza, which now takes up 14 percent of Gaza's land area (and which expanded to roughly 44 percent of Gaza's land area during Israel's July 2014 invasion). Israel also significantly restricted movement between the strip and the West Bank for most Palestinians. The border closures devastated the Gazan economy.

In 2005, toward the end of the Second Intifada, Israel unilaterally withdrew its military from Gaza and evacuated all Israeli settlements in the Gaza Strip, effectively handing administrative and security control to the Palestinian Authority while opening up some of the closed border crossings to Gaza. However, after the political party Hamas won full control of Gaza in 2007, Israel again closed the borders and imposed a blockade of goods into Gaza by land, air, and sea.

For Gazans such as Wafa Al-Udaini, the border closings would have made life nearly impossible if not for smuggler's tunnels that allowed goods to pass from Egypt into Gaza. Though seen as a military threat by Israel (a means of weapons smuggling to Hamas), the network of over 1,200 tunnels also provided Gazans with food, construction material, medicine, and occasional luxury goods that wouldn't otherwise be available to them.

A LOT OF KIDS SKIPPED SCHOOL TO DEMONSTRATE OR THROW ROCKS

I was born in a hospital in Gaza City in 1988. I'm from a big family—I have five brothers and six sisters. I'm the youngest. The town I grew up in is called Deir Al-Balah. It's right in the middle of the Gaza Strip, about a half-hour drive south of Gaza City.[1]

I grew up used to seeing soldiers in the streets while I played. They'd always be chasing someone who'd thrown stones. Especially by the start of the Second Intifada around 2000, there were so many soldiers around all the time.[2] I remember Israeli soldiers came into our home once to arrest two of my brothers. One brother was seventeen at the time, and the other was just thirteen. They banged on the door until my mother opened it, and then the

soldiers hit her on their way in to get my brothers. I was so scared. The soldiers claimed my brothers were throwing stones, but really they might have arrested my brothers just for looking at them funny. That happened a lot. I cried and cried after they left, it was so frightening.

My seventeen-year-old brother was studying for his tawjihi exams at the time, and after he was sent home after being detained for a couple of months, he was too frustrated to continue studying.[3] My younger brother was released right away, but he stopped going to school. During the Second Intifada, a lot of kids skipped school to demonstrate in the streets or throw rocks. But I stayed in school and continued to high school during the Second Intifada. Then suddenly, in 2005, Israeli soldiers left Gaza.[4] For the first time we didn't see the soldiers in the streets, only Gazans. But at the same time, Israel was sealing the borders, so it was hard for people to go to work. Then Hamas got elected, and a lot of aid into Gaza was cut off.[5]

Not long after that, I passed my tawjihi exams and got accepted into Al-Aqsa University in Gaza City.[6] I began studying education at Al-Aqsa around 2006, and then after my first year of school, the blockade started.[7] The first thing I remember was the blackouts. Suddenly, we only had power a few hours a day at most. And there was no propane gas to cook with anymore, so we had to hoard it. Really basic things—formula and diapers, for instance—weren't available, at least at first. But then so much of what we needed started coming through the tunnels. Before long you could get just about anything you wanted—European chocolate, designer clothes, anything.

EVERYWHERE I LOOKED I SAW SMOKE

I was nineteen and still a student during the air strikes in 2008 and 2009. The first day of the strikes, December 27, 2008, was quite memorable. I left the university early because I only had one lecture that day. Just before I reached my house, I heard many explosions. I said to myself, *Oh my God, what's happening? There's so much smoke, and I can't see*. I ran home and went upstairs to see what was going on from our roof, and everywhere I looked I saw smoke, but I didn't know exactly what was happening—there

was no electricity so I couldn't find out what was going on from the TV. I tried to call out to my brothers and my sisters, but they were out of the house and nobody replied.

I was so worried. My neighbors said that Israeli fighter jets had targeted a place in Khan Younis, but some other neighbors said that they targeted a place in Gaza City, and then some others said, no, it was in the south.[8] Everyone had a different idea about what was going on. I thought, *Oh my God, who should I believe?* When I looked up, the sky was full of airplanes and helicopters.

The first day, the fighter jets bombed hundreds of places, including mosques. They must have targeted every mosque in the Gaza Strip. Our house is close to a mosque, and some of our neighbors were so afraid, because the Israelis could have attacked the mosque at any time and destroyed our building in the process. So our neighbors wanted to go to another, safer place. But we told them there was no safe place in the Gaza Strip. Wherever you went, you would find danger there. The jets ended up bombing the mosque and our house shook violently during the explosion, but nobody was hurt. Only the windows of our building were damaged.

It's a funny story, actually. Okay, it's not funny, but our relatives lived near the border with Israel, and they came to live with us near the coast where it was a little safer. But unfortunately, the night they came to our house, the Israelis targeted the mosque. They were so scared! Our relatives left our house saying, "Oh my God! No place is safe to live! We'd rather die in our own house than die in yours!"

I remember the drones showing up. They buzzed through the skies, and the sound they made was like they were whispering, "I'm going to attack you, I'm going to target your house, your family, your friends." But now we're used to the sound of drones.

The last war, in 2012 was more difficult, actually, because in 2008, to some extent, the Israeli army was coming into Gaza. But in 2012, it was just planes. They hit many places, not just police stations and mosques, but houses—really everything in the Gaza Strip.

By 2012, I had graduated and become a teacher. I was a substitute, and would fill in where I was needed. When I was a teacher, I had a very smart student, and I loved her so much. She was an excellent student. She was in

the first grade when I taught her. But just about five months after the air strikes in 2012, I met her again, and I was shocked when I saw her. She had lost her mind, and she was walking down the street as if she didn't know anybody. I went to her and asked, "Do you remember me? I was at your school. Do you remember?" The girl looked at me and laughed. She didn't remember anything. I spoke with her mom and she told me the girl's uncle was killed in front of her eyes. The Israelis bombed the place where he was sitting. He was a civilian, not involved in the resistance at all. He was just sitting in front of his house. And, unfortunately, they also traumatized this girl. And really, I was so shocked and so sad when I saw her.

WHEN THERE WAS NO ELECTRICITY, MY MIND WOULD FEEL SO SLEEPY

Since 2007, we've suffered a lot from power cuts. We might get six or eight hours a day on good days. And power might be on in the morning or at night. Every week we get a new schedule, published in the papers and announced on TV or radio. Everything is affected by the power cuts. So it's hard to establish a daily routine.

We never had a generator at my family's house, because I have a lot of nieces and a lot of nephews, and we were so afraid that one of them would touch it and get burned. You know, you hear many stories of generators blowing up and whole families dying. So we preferred to live without electricity than to see our families injured. We wouldn't use candles either because they're dangerous. Instead, we had battery-operated lights that can be charged during the limited time that power is on. They're safer.

I lived in my parents' household until this past year. There were about twenty-five, twenty-six people in our household—mostly my brothers' families. All my sisters had married and moved out. During that time, when the power went out, we'd go to the upstairs of the house. I'd sit with my extended family, chatting and having fun.

Sometimes if most of the family was out, I'd read books or write. But when there was no electricity, my mind would feel so sleepy! This was always a major problem for me. I'd lose concentration for reading or studying for my exams, for example. When I was still a student, I'd have to

prepare an assignment for our professor at the university, but I couldn't rely on an internet connection because power would go in and out, so maybe I wouldn't finish in time. Plus, many times the lights wouldn't last for more than two hours, so I had this tiny window to do all my studying. It was a lot of pressure.

As for housework, I couldn't use the washing machine much of the time. I couldn't even make tea with the electric kettle. And I really suffered from not being able to iron my clothes. After I graduated and started teaching, I'd be late to work many times because I was waiting for the electricity to come on to iron. Sometimes I'd go to my friend's house in another city where they had power that day, just to do some ironing.[9] Since the blockade began, we've had a shortage of cooking gas too. I cannot make sweets or bake a cake. Every time I want to make one, I can't because I don't have any propane gas.

Then there are the water problems. The water is affected by the electricity. There is a water pump in town, so when there is no power, for sure there will be no water. Then the water is polluted. It's saltwater, not for human use.[10] We buy water for drinking and cooking. The other water cannot be used for even animals. We only use it to wash our dishes, clean the house, and wash clothes. Even in the shower, the water ruins our hair. We wash our hair with the sweet water, but not all the time. We can't manage to have a shower with only sweet water. It's not free. So maybe for a wedding, we'll wash our hair well. We have to pay for everything, and a lot of people here in Gaza are unemployed. So they can't pay for the electricity, they can't pay for the gas or the water.

We depended on the tunnels to bring us our basic needs—our food, our clothes, our medicine, everything. When the tunnels were open, we'd go to the store and find all sorts of things. But Egypt and Israel have destroyed the tunnels now, so there's hardly anything in the stores.[11]

MY WEDDING DRESS MIGHT HAVE BEEN BROUGHT THROUGH THE TUNNELS

This year, I got married. Planning for the wedding was a bit of a challenge! One thing I remember was visiting the market to buy my wedding dress. I asked the merchant if all the dresses had been made in Gaza, and he said that many had been sewn in Turkey or Egypt and brought through the tunnels. It's amazing to think of these beautiful dresses being carried fifty feet under the ground through dark, muddy tunnels.

My husband and I were married on March 24, 2014. The day of the wedding, we had to improvise a little. Normally families would prepare food themselves for a wedding in Gaza, but cooking gas was too hard to find. We had to hire a restaurant to cater the wedding for us, since restaurants had an easier time finding cooking fuel. Of course it was all very expensive. We rented a wedding hall, but nobody could afford to take a taxi to the wedding hall because gasoline is expensive, and cabs are nearly unaffordable. We had everyone coming from the neighborhood meet at the bus stop, and we all went to the wedding hall from there. Still, it was a beautiful wedding, and I was happy even in my wedding dress that might have been brought through the tunnels.

Now that the tunnels are closed and nothing can get through Egypt, things are getting harder. Nobody has any money, and basic necessities like food are more expensive than ever. There is so much that needs to change in Gaza, but if I could change just one thing, I'd fix the poverty that's making life so difficult for so many Gazans.

Wafa and her family were especially hard hit by the bombing assault on Gaza that began July 8. They had no water for days at a time, and their access to electricity dwindled. Wafa was unable to use internet or even charge her cell phone, making it impossible to talk with her to get a full update. When she had electricity, she posted brief messages on Facebook and Twitter assuring her followers she was still alive. On July 8, she posted that the Israeli air force sent a warning to the twenty-five family members living in her father-in-law's house (seventeen of whom were children), telling them to leave their home. The family was able to leave before the house was destroyed. On July 25, Wafa wrote, "[Two weeks ago] they bombed my father in law's house, and today Israeli planes bombed my

house, our only shelter, for no reason, and no evidence, just to [make] us kneel, but we'll never ever leave our country for them. Pray for us."

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[1] Deir Al-Balah is a city of about 55,000 people located nine miles south of Gaza City. The vast majority of residents in Deir Al-Balah are refugees who settled in the city after the war in 1948. The city is known for its date palms, and it has a history that stretches back to fortifications used by pharaohs in the fourteenth century BCE.

[2] The Second Intifada was also known as the Al-Aqsa Intifada. It was the first major conflict between Israel and Palestine following the Oslo accords, and it lasted from 2000 to 2005. For more information on the Intifadas, see Appendix I, page 295.

[3] An exit exam for high school. For more on the tawjihi exams, see the Glossary, page 304.

[4] Israel unilaterally decided to disengage from Gaza in 2004, and the plan went into effect in the late summer of 2005. Under Israel's plan, twenty-one settlements in the Gaza Strip would be evacuated, and the settlers compensated. The Israeli military would leave Gaza completely and leave the entire strip to the administrative and security control of the Palestinian Authority.

[5] After Israel unilaterally withdrew from Gaza, parliamentary elections were held in 2006, and Hamas won the majority of the seats. For more information, see Appendix I, page 295.

[6] Al-Aqsa University is one of a half dozen or so colleges and universities in Gaza. It serves around 6,000 undergraduates.

[7] Economic sanctions began in 2006 after the election of Hamas, but the full blockade wasn't imposed until a year later, after bloody fighting between Hamas and Fatah in June 2007 drove Fatah out of Gaza.

[8] Khan Younis is a major city in Gaza located about twenty miles south of Gaza City. It has a population of around 250,000.

[9] The electricity outages rotate throughout the Gaza Strip, so different cities lose power at different times of the day.

[10] Up to 95 percent of Gaza's water is not fresh. Aside from salt, most of Gaza's water also contains organic and inorganic toxins. Most drinking water is purchased in tanks in Gaza's markets. Salt water is frequently used for showering and cleaning.

[11] For more on the tunnel economy in Gaza, see Appendix IV, page 321.

SILWAN, EAST JERUSALEM

AHMAD AL-QARAEEN

Shop owner, 43
Born in Silwan, East Jerusalem
Interviewed in Silwan, East Jerusalem

After the Arab-Israeli War in 1948, Israel took possession of Jerusalem's mostly Jewish western half, while Jordan administered the mostly Arab eastern half, which included the Old City of Jerusalem, the hill that houses the Temple Mount (the holiest site in Judaism, where the Second Temple was located), and the Al-Aqsa Mosque (one of the holiest sites in Islam, where, according to the Quran, the Prophet Mohammed was miraculously conveyed from Mecca to pass along the word of Allah). In 1967, during the Six-Day War, Israel took possession of East Jerusalem along with the rest of the West Bank. In 1980, Israel declared the whole of Jerusalem the undivided capital of Israel, while the Palestine Liberation Organization, led by Yasser Arafat, maintained that the city was the capital of Palestine.

The East Jerusalem neighborhood of Silwan has over 30,000 residents and sits in the shadow of the Temple Mount and Al-Aqsa Mosque to its north. Numerous archaeological excavations in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have provided evidence that Silwan was the original Bronze Age site of the city that would become Jerusalem. Though the majority of the population is still Arab, since the 1980s, hundreds of Jewish settler families have moved into the area, and the tension between settlers and Arabs often boils over into violence.

The first time we walk through Silwan in 2012, a playground and a community center have just been demolished by the Jerusalem police and Israel's National Parks Authority. A few dozen frustrated children play in

the rubble where the playground was. Some are chucking onions at each other, and onion skin floats through the air like snow. The community center was razed to make room for a new visitor center for the City of David National Park, a massive archaeological museum and dig site that is privately operated by Elad, an East Jerusalem settler organization.

We then visit the nearby Wadi Hilweh Information Center and inquire about people who might be willing to share their stories. There, we meet Ahmad Al-Qaraeen, who is showing a video about Silwan's troubles to a group of tourists.

Ahmad is ruggedly handsome, with light eyes and a scruffy voice. He begins telling us the story of why he walks with a cane, and we sit with him for a couple of hours before making a date to come back. Over the course of half a dozen meetings, Ahmad tells us of his sense of connection to the neighborhood and the problems he has struggled to overcome since being shot twice outside his home by a settler in 2009.

ALL OF MY DREAMS START FROM HERE

I was born here in Silwan in 1971. All my family was born here—my father, my father's father's father's father, as far back as I know. Silwan, it's part of my life. I am part of Silwan. All of my dreams start from here. I've only left Silwan one or two times in my life. My neighborhood, my friends, everything here is made for me.

I was working in the streets here by the time I was six, seven years old. I've learned everything from these streets. So much of the community was supported by tourism when I was young. My parents and neighbors worked in coffee shops, restaurants, and as guides. When I was a child, I sold souvenirs, cold drinks, and ice cream to tourists. I learned English before I even started school. I spent a lot of time at the Silwan pool.[1] I'd sell things to tourists in the parking lot there, and I'd help give little tours when I was twelve or so, just showing people around and talking about the history of the place. I knew it well—I could walk from end to end in the dark at night, without a flashlight.

For me, things began to change at the time of the First Intifada in 1987, when I was seventeen.[2] My school was closed during the fighting. It was closed for more than a year, and I never went back. Instead, I started to work. I got a job working in a factory shaping metal. I did that for two years. One day I asked my boss, “What is the metal from this order going to build?” He said, “It’s for the Israeli tanks and airplanes.” I had no idea we were doing that, and so I quit.

Around 1991, after the whole world started to talk about peace and the end of the Intifada, things really started to change in my neighborhood. Jewish settlers were moving in. There were police everywhere then, and private security as well to protect the new settlers.[3]

One day a group of settlers approached my father and tried to get him to sell our house. They said, “Put whatever figure you want on this check, and that’s what we’ll buy it for.” But my father wouldn’t sell—he helped build the house himself when he was just a teenager in the 1940s. Settlers tried the same with other houses in my neighborhood, and they got maybe a few houses that way. In other cases, they’d try to forge papers that were supposed to show that the house had already been sold generations ago, way back in the 1930s. And the more settlers moved in, the more things changed. Suddenly, there were private security guards with big guns at the Silwan pool, and they’d charge visitors money. When my neighbors and I would try to go there, they’d say, “Palestinians aren’t allowed.”

During this time, I worked installing carpeting. And after that I started to work for a furniture company, assembling furniture, and then I became a truck driver. Around 1998, when I was twenty-seven, I got married. My wife’s father is my father’s cousin, so she was my second cousin. She was seventeen at the time, and after she finished school, I helped her pay for university for six years. We had two sons a year apart, Ali and Wadee, in 1998 and 1999. Around this time I also bought a truck for myself, and I started my own business as a mover. I worked for Palestinians, for Jewish people, for everyone. In a month I was making 7,000 or 8,000 shekels—enough for my family.[4] For many years, life was good.

YOU SENSE THE SMOKE INSIDE YOU

My story, it's one of thousands of similar stories. I don't like to talk about it, but I have to talk about it. I want people to know what happened to me.

It was September 11, 2009, maybe five-thirty, six in the evening—it was a little before sunset. It was Ramadan, and I was dozing at home, waiting for the sun to go down so that my family could break fast for the day.[5] Suddenly, I heard some people shouting outside, so I went to see what it was about. In the street, dozens of people were shouting at a few private Israeli security guards and a couple of settlers. I asked someone, "Why are you shouting?" And he said, "These two settlers were hitting children in the street, and we're demanding that the security guards get these settlers out of here." I don't think anyone wanted trouble though, since it was Ramadan. It wasn't time for fighting.

My own children were out on the streets at the time, and they were only nine and ten, so I was worried about them. I began to look for them to get them into the house. I also kept my eye on the settlers. They were young, maybe in their early twenties, and dressed in street clothes. They were shouting and pushing at a group of children in the street. Suddenly, I saw one of the settlers put an M-16 in the air. Then he pointed his gun, and I saw that he was aiming at a child. And then I realized the child was my son Ali. At the same time, I saw my son Wadee getting hit by the other settler. I was horrified, and realized my neighbors were shouting about my own sons being attacked by the settlers.

I moved toward the settler with the gun and demanded, "Why are you doing this?" He turned to me and said that he could do what he liked. He started to walk away, and I said, "Wait, I want to talk to you. I know you can do this, but why?" He said, "No, you will not touch me." I said, "I want to talk to you—if we do something wrong to you, you can call your security guys. You can call the policeman to come to help you. But I will not allow you to touch my son." As I spoke, the settler was backing away and looking at me and my son, and suddenly, he stumbled backward onto the ground. The other settler yelled, "You have to shoot." So the settler who had stumbled stood up and fired. The people in the crowd started shouting, and I fell down.

I felt like someone had stabbed me with a knife. When you get shot, you sense the smoke inside you. I felt it, and I smelled it in my body. I could

taste the bullet in my blood. I saw my right leg was bleeding, and it was twisted beneath me. The bullet was in the thigh.

The people in the crowd asked me where I'd been hit. I said, "I don't know exactly, don't touch me." My two sons ran to my side and asked why it had happened. I was sitting on the ground. I couldn't feel my leg. I started to ask for an ambulance.

I heard the people shouting, and then I heard another shot. The man who shot me had shot another boy in the crowd who was on a bicycle. The boy was about fifteen. Then the man came back and he shot me a second time, this time in the left knee. Why, I don't know. Even the Israeli security guards asked him, "Why are you shooting?" But after that, the shooter and his friend just ran away.

Some people in the crowd called for the ambulance to come and help me. I was bleeding on the street for five minutes. A neighbor brought over some towels, and she packed them on my leg, while a man tied them with a belt to try to stop the blood. They told me, "Someone with a car wants to take you to the hospital." We didn't think an ambulance was going to come any time soon.

They took me and put me in the car. I saw that the boy from the bicycle was already in the car. The man and woman lifted me up under my arms. I felt as though my leg had stayed behind in the street. I told them, "Wait, wait!" I couldn't move my muscles, so I had to lift my leg by the pants and put it in the car. I still couldn't feel it. It was not mine. After that I sat in the car, bleeding. The blood soaked my T-shirt, my shoes, everything in the car.

Then we took off, but on the way to the hospital, the car was stopped twice by Israeli police, and the driver was almost arrested. It was a Friday, and he was probably the only Muslim driving that day, since it's prohibited on Fridays during Ramadan. Once the police realized the situation, they let us go, but they followed us to the hospital.

At the hospital, while the doctor was checking me, a policeman came. He told the doctor, "You have to leave now. You can check on the boy who came in with him, but I want to ask this man some questions." So he interrogated me about the incident, even as I was bleeding.

After I was questioned, my wife showed up. She said that my family, my cousins, they thought that I had died. They were already discussing the funeral.

The doctors got me ready for surgery, and then I was on the operating table for five hours. I later learned that they'd told my wife, "Maybe he has a chance, maybe not." I'd lost eight units of blood and I was very weak.

Later, my sons showed up at the hospital. They looked so sad, and they just said, "We're sorry." I asked them why, and I learned that they'd been interrogated by the police. The police had told them that they provoked the fight with the settlers, and that they were responsible for me getting shot. I told them, "No, no, no, don't think about that. It's not your fault." But even now, they believe that if they hadn't gone out in the streets, I wouldn't have been shot. They still feel guilty.

The police wanted to charge me with assaulting a soldier. The settler who'd shot me was in the Israeli military, but he hadn't been wearing his uniform that day. But luckily, someone in the crowd had taken photos of everything that happened, so it was easy to prove that I hadn't physically attacked the settler in any way.

MY SONS NEED MORE FROM ME

Three months after the operation, I went to get a checkup, and my leg still wasn't healing. They performed another surgery to clean out fragments and repair the bone. I stayed at home in a wheelchair for eight months after the shooting. Then I started walking again with a walker. After the first year at home, I started to have more pain, and it turns out I needed even more surgeries. Eventually, I replaced the walker with a cane.

All of this has changed my life. As a truck driver, part of my job was to move furniture. Also, I would help my family, help out around the neighborhood, play soccer—I can't do any of those things anymore. I have had five surgeries so far. I have two more scheduled. And I have pain whenever I try to do anything physical, even something simple, like helping my son fix his bike. I just can't do it.

For my older son, Ali, the disaster has changed everything in his life. After he was attacked and he saw me get shot, he started to feel like his father couldn't protect him. And when he saw that his father couldn't protect him, he wanted to protect himself. Now, if someone starts picking on him or says something nasty, my son fights with him. These last two

years, I've had him in three different schools because of his fighting. Before the shooting, he didn't have any problems in school. Both boys are fighting in school, with other children and with the teachers. And they get angry at the settlers. My sons, they need more from me. As their father, I cannot help them.

One day at home, my sons came to me and said, "Dad, we saw the settler who shot you." I told them, "No, no, he's in jail." I was lying to them. I'd learned that he only spent a day in jail before he was released. They said, "No, we remember him, we saw him." The truth is that the guy who shot me was taken by the police, but he was only questioned for a couple of hours and stayed in jail for twenty-four hours. They picked him up that night. It was Friday when he shot me. Friday night there's no court, and Saturday during the day there's no court, so Saturday evening he went to court and he said that he was defending himself. That was it. They closed the file.

I believe in non-violence. And I tell my children what happened. They ask me, "Why did this Jewish guy shoot you?" I tell them that it's settlers, not all Jewish people. I tell my boys that the difference between the settlers and Jewish people is that the settlers have come here from all over, and they don't really know or understand the land like the Jewish people who have lived here their whole lives do. We visit my friends from Jewish families, and they visited me when I was injured. I've worked with many Jewish people, so I speak some Hebrew. My sons know the difference between the settlers and the other Jewish people. They know. I have told them many, many times. But I also tell them that this is our village, we have to stay here. I tell them to be non-violent, because it's better. If you want to fight something, if you use violence, you will lose.

The building of settlement homes in East Jerusalem continues to contribute to failure of peace talks between Israel and Palestine. In April 2014, the Israeli Housing Ministry authorized the construction of seven hundred new homes for settlers in East Jerusalem. In response, the Palestinian Authority

pulled out of talks and unilaterally applied for statehood recognition from fifteen international treaty organizations. Immediately after, Israeli courts authorized the continued expansion and development of the City of David National Park in Silwan.

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[1] The Silwan pool is an attraction for both Jewish and Christian tourists visiting holy sites. It is said to have been the springs that fed Solomon's gardens and is also the site of a miracle performed by Christ that is described in the Bible. It has been a source of fresh water for the city of Jerusalem for millennia.

[2] The First Intifada was an uprising throughout the West Bank and Gaza against Israeli military occupation. It began in December 1987 and lasted until 1993. *Intifada* in Arabic means "to shake off." For more information, see Appendix I, page 295.

[3] By the mid-eighties, approximately 75,000 settlers lived in East Jerusalem. By the end of the First Intifada, the population had doubled to over 150,000 and has since increased to over 200,000.

[4] At the time, 8,000 shekels equaled approximately US$2,800.

[5] During the month of Ramadan, observant Muslims fast from sunrise to sunset each day.

MUHANNED AL-AZZAH IN FRONT OF HIS ARTWORK

MUHANNED AL-AZZAH

Artist, 33
Born in Al-Azzah refugee camp, West Bank
Interviewed in Bethlehem and Ramallah, West Bank

The Al-Azzah refugee camp in Bethlehem is barely more than an alleyway bordered by dozens of small houses jammed closely together. As one walks through the tight corridors, it's hard to miss the haunting murals painted on the walls of the houses. These paintings are taken from the Handala cartoon series created by the late Palestinian artist Naji Al-Ali.[1] *In one mural, a girl's hair is twisted into barbed wire. The painting on another house shows gaunt refugees packing their bags and preparing to flee. On another house farther down the street, fat politicians wag their fingers at an emaciated man in rags.*

The artist behind these graffitied murals is Muhanned Al-Azzah. With a full beard on his lean face, Muhanned looks the part of an artist. He's soft spoken but funny, and laughter accompanies all of our interviews.

Muhanned's family gave the Al-Azzah refugee camp its name when they led the flight from their village in what is now Israel to Bethlehem during the Arab-Israeli War, or Nakba, in 1948.[2] *For Muhanned, as well as many other refugees, the dream of returning to lands lost in 1948 (and during the Six-Day War in 1967) persists, even if little remains today of those farms and villages. This dream of a right to return to property long ago claimed by Israel drives much of the politics of resistance within Palestine.*[3]

Muhanned is a prolific painter, and his work can be found both on the sides of buildings and in galleries around the West Bank. On the day of our

first interview, he is preparing a collection of abstract paintings for a show in London. Muhanned's paintings explore different subjects, but his recurring focus is the three years he spent in an Israeli prison. At the end of our first interview, he shows us his rooftop studio, his paintings, and the bullet holes in the walls from the night of his arrest.

MY FAMILY HAS BEEN IN THE CAMP SINCE 1948

I was born here in the camp, in September 1981. My parents were born here too. In 1948, my grandparents on both sides left our land, our original village, Beit Jibrin, which is northwest of Hebron.[4] Even though I've never visited Beit Jibrin, I feel I'm from there. I know all its details, since I've heard so much about it from my grandparents. I know that it's our village.

I know the story of how my grandparents fled the village in October of 1948.[5] One day the soldiers came with guns, planes, and tanks, and everyone in town fled to nearby caves. But some people came back to the village in the night to sleep inside their houses or get things they needed. Then Israeli soldiers entered each house. The first adult male they found inside a house, they brought him to an open space and shot him in front of everyone. The men knew that if they were caught, they might be arrested or shot, so they fled right away. The women followed with whatever they could carry. They didn't have much money, and they couldn't carry much with them. The most important thing was to bring documents to prove that they owned their houses and keep them someplace safe. Most villagers fleeing Beit Jibrin then came here to Bethlehem, where they set up a camp and named it Al-Azzah, after my family.

I have a twin sister, two younger brothers, and one younger sister. Life in the camp has been the same since I was a child. On a typical day, we wake up and the adults go to the main street to eat and talk, to speak about things that are important. Really, it's like cocktail conversation—the news of the day, what's happening with different families, what's happening with the houses in camp. We have political discussions every day, but only in the evenings. In the morning, politics will destroy your brain.

This camp has a little over 1,500 people living in maybe 120 buildings, all packed close together. Everyone knows each other—people spend a lot of time outside because we have such small houses. On the one hand, it can be useful that the community is so close. If a family needs work done on their house, people from the neighborhood will just show up and help. If a family is hungry, a neighbor always has food for them. But you can't expect any privacy here. If you make something good to eat, people are going to know about it and show up for a meal. If you just want some time to yourself, forget about it. You could be sitting in your pajamas trying to rest or think, and someone will show up at your house and say, "Hey, you wanna go get coffee?" It was especially hard for my sisters growing up. If they came home in the evenings even just a little late, everyone in the camp would know they were out late and gossip about them. The girls have an even harder time here than the boys, I think.

THE SOLDIERS WENT CRAZY WHEN THEY FOUND WRITING ON THE WALLS

I grew up dreaming of Beit Jibrin as a paradise. My grandparents always told us about how great life was for them there. Their home and garden in Beit Jibrin were as big as the whole refugee camp where my family lives now. All of my family has hoped that one day we'd be able to return there and live again in our own home.

That's why we were against the Oslo Accords in the mid-nineties.[6] The accords officially made the land that Beit Jibrin was on part of Israel. For us, we've always wanted a single state between Israel and Palestine so that we can return to Beit Jibrin. We didn't want to accept the Oslo Accords, and some parties in Palestine didn't either. The PFLP opposed the accords and the idea of two separate states that took our land in places like Beit Jibrin and just gave it up to Israel.[7] The PFLP also supported the right of return, the rights of Palestinians to reclaim land lost in the war during the Nakba.[8] So as I grew up, although there wasn't really a single time or event that led me to it, I came to join the PFLP. There were other things I liked about them too—they weren't a religious party. Hamas, that's the big religious

party. And Fatah, that's the big party within the Palestinian Liberation Organization, they were always looking for compromise and were willing to accept two states.[9] But the PFLP seemed like a fit for me—they represented my interests as a refugee from 1948. I'm not going to say much more about their beliefs, though, because I don't want this story to sound like propaganda!

As I grew up, I got more and more into art. My father was an Arabic Literature teacher, and my parents sent me to classes and workshops in Palestinian art at a young age. I grew up seeing art as a way of resistance, through graffiti. During the First Intifada, in 1987, there was no media, there was no radio to cover all that was happening in Palestine.[10] But there were the walls of the houses. They were the only place for media. For example, if there was to be a strike the next day and everyone had to close their shops, there was no simple way to get the message out. So in the night, some people with masks would go into the street with spray paint and write, "Tomorrow, August 9, will be a day of strike for all the shops and schools." So in the morning, everybody could see it.

And every day, when the people went outside, the first thing they did was look at the walls. Sometimes the message was, "Next week, we are gathering for a demonstration on Tuesday." Sometimes there was writing about a martyr, someone who was killed in Bethlehem.[11] The soldiers, when they came in the camp, they'd go crazy when they found this writing on the walls. They would arrest people, and every day there was a fight over who should clean it up. Some people cleaned it, some people refused. And it was very dangerous when artists went out at night to write on the walls.

I was doing some of the same sort of thing even as a teenager. Art was my own individual way of resisting, but we can't do much just as individuals to resist—that just leads to chaos, so that's why I joined the PFLP. More than anything I wanted a chance to go back some day to live in Beit Jibrin, and so a lot of my art has been about being a refugee, about wanting to return home.

After high school, I went to Al-Quds University in Abu Dis to study painting.[12] I also had a chance to study traditional arts in Morocco—

decoration, Andalusian art, mosaics, and writing.[13] When I returned home, I continued to study Palestinian art and culture, and I stayed politically active as well.

I was part of the PFLP through 2004, when I was around twenty-two. I met with other members and organized protests and other campaigns on campus. The Israelis considered the PFLP terrorists and an illegal political party, and so I knew that I could be arrested one day, and maybe even killed. But at that time I was feeling that we were under occupation and somebody must do something to change this situation, and anything anybody could do for Palestine was for the good.

SOMETIMES PEOPLE JUST DISAPPEAR

Late on the night of April 15, 2004, I was home asleep. I slept in an apartment on the roof, where I also had an art studio. My whole family was there, and they stayed on the second floor of the building. We had a friend staying with us as well. My uncle's family lived on the ground floor. Suddenly I woke up hearing megaphones. I knew it was the Israeli military. They were ordering everyone out onto the street, demanding that everyone on the block come out of their homes.

I got out of bed quickly and my first thought was how I could escape. I went to the window and looked out. I saw my neighbors filing out of their homes, and Israeli soldiers were there with jeeps and vans—it looked like they were circling the entire camp. As I watched, the soldiers were moving toward our house, starting to circle it. Then they called out my name through the megaphone. They spoke directly to me in Arabic. "Muhanned Al-Azzah. You cannot escape. Put your hands up and leave the house."

I took my time, if I can speak freely, to hide whatever I didn't want them to take when they searched the house. I hadn't been part of planning any big operations or doing anything violent, but it was against Israeli law to even promote or be part of the PFLP. I guessed they were arresting me because someone had let them know I was organizing for the party.

All I could think was that I might die in a moment, and I asked God for just a few more moments to live. My adrenaline was so high, it wasn't a matter of being strong or not strong, just wanting to survive. But I took my

time and put on warm clothes. I knew if I went outside, there would be no time to come back and get clothes. After a few minutes, they started shouting into the megaphone again. By this time, the rest of the people in my house were already outside. I started to see the red laser lights of their guns all over my room. They fired a couple of shots at the house. And they kept demanding that I come out, even as they were shooting at my window. I hid as best I could while I decided what to do next.

After some more time, they brought my mother from the street to my bedroom door. She told me to open the door, that it was safe to go outside. So finally I opened the door and went out with five laser sights hovering over my body. I was terrified.

My neighbors were all outside their houses sitting in the street in the middle of the night. There were maybe fifty people, my family and neighbors, watching and waiting for me.

The soldiers didn't tell me why they were arresting me. They told my family they needed to speak with me for five to ten minutes and then I'd come back. My mother was crying, but she couldn't move because there were a lot of soldiers surrounding her. She couldn't tell me goodbye. My family knew I would come back, but not when—in one hour? One day? One hundred years?

After the soldiers handcuffed me, they put me in one of their jeeps, and we drove for what seemed like a couple of hours. We ended up at Al-Muskubiya in Jerusalem.[14]

The room where they took me was small—maybe eight feet by eight feet, white, with air conditioning. There was a white light, a table, and computer—these were the only things in sight, other than a chair in the middle of the room. The chair was fixed to the ground. They cuffed my hands behind the chair and chained my legs and hands to it. I couldn't move a millimeter.

Then they questioned me for two days straight. They'd be asking me questions for twenty or more hours a day, with three or four officers asking the same sorts of questions. They weren't really about anything particular—just questions about my life. They didn't even accuse me of anything. I started to get very confused and disoriented. I fell asleep hundreds of times, but just for a second each time. When they saw that I was nodding off,

they'd throw water on me to wake me up. They pushed me very hard. Twice a day, they brought me beans and released one of my hands. They said I had two minutes to eat. After two days of being awake, sitting upright, not moving, my legs and hands became numb.

They'd also tell me things to break me down. They told me that my house had been demolished, that my family had been killed. They brought pictures of my younger brothers and told me they'd been shot. I didn't really doubt them, and I assumed I'd be killed too. Sometimes people just disappear, and I thought I'd be one of those people. I started to feel lost, just completely out of focus.

Finally on the third day, they let me know I was being held because of my association with the PFLP and because they suspected the PFLP was planning an attack on Israel. They wanted me to talk about it. I didn't know anything about an attack, but I also didn't want to give them any names of other people in the PFLP that I knew, so I stayed quiet. If I gave them names of other PFLP members, they would arrest them too. Sometimes they'd interrogate me for just a few hours a day, sometimes for twenty hours or more. When I wasn't being interrogated, they sent me to a small, gray room—less than six feet by six feet. If I tried to lie down to sleep, my head and legs would be pressed against opposite walls. If I caused a problem in this room, like making too much noise, they'd cuff me and leave me bound up for five or six hours. They gave me just enough food to keep me alive. After a week, they gave me a few cigarettes but no lighter.

Sometimes in between long sessions, they'd put me in a cell with other Arab men. These men would tell me their stories, say they were from Hebron or whatever, and then start asking a lot of questions about me. It was pretty obvious that these men were informants, part of the interrogation, and that their job was to get me to talk when I was feeling less scared, more relaxed. They'd say things like, "I told the Israelis everything, and now I can sleep. If you tell them everything, they'll be easier with you."

I never saw sunlight. I never knew what time it was—evening, morning? I would sleep for a few hours, and I didn't know whether I slept for one hour or for one hundred hours. I didn't know what day it was. I didn't know anything. I spent a lot of time alone, and my mind was going, but I had something inside that pushed me to stay strong.

JAIL IS A TIME TO MAKE AN EVALUATION OF YOUR LIFE

After about four months in Al-Muskubiya, I was taken to military court.[15] There were around twenty soldiers there, all with guns. I felt alone and threatened, and I think this was part of the game. They wanted to scare me in any way they could. But I felt strong, because I was not just one person, I was one with the Palestinian cause. I was a civilian, I had the right to resist occupation, and I didn't care about what they would accuse me of. I didn't listen to what they said, really. They charged me with political activism, activity against the Israeli state, and being a member of an illegal political party—the PFLP. They had no evidence against me that I was part of any attacks on Israel, just that I had promoted the PFLP. They gave me three years.

I was taken to a prison near Be'er Sheva around August of 2004, not quite four months after my arrest.[16] The amazing thing was that the route that the prison bus took to get to Be'er Sheva took me right through the site where my home village, Beit Jibrin, used to be. I had never seen it before, so I tried to see as much as I could as we passed through. When I saw the village, I was shaken. My grandparents had said so many good things about it, about the good old days. I had dreamt of it as a paradise. But the land was barren except for a few trailers that make up an Israeli settlement. There was an old mosque, and lots of ruins—old stones and parts of buildings that were thousands of years old.

My grandparents had been driven from their home by force, and here I was seeing it, again only by force. It was hard. I was alone. It reminded me that I wasn't with my family, and I always imagined I'd see the village some day with them. It was a bad, lonely feeling. It was almost like I had woken up from a coma—I couldn't make sense of everything that must have changed from that time before 1948, a time I knew only in my dreams.

Life at the prison at Be'er Sheva took some time to get used to. I spent most of my days inside my cell. The cells were about ten feet by fifteen feet, and there were seven people living in each one. There were bunk beds for each of us, but we couldn't come down from the beds all together at the same time because there wasn't enough space to stand. For example, when we wanted to clean the room, only two people could do the cleaning.

Everyone was from different places. Some people were very old, some people were young. Some had ten or twenty years in jail, and some had one year. If you wanted time alone, you had to pretend you were sleeping. From the first day, I began to get to know the other prisoners pretty well. Social relations in Palestine are very close—there are strong connections between Palestinian people. So you can find somebody in jail whose brother or friends you know and you can speak with him.

We had two opportunities to leave our room—once in the morning and once for an hour in the evening. We walked outside in the prison courtyard. In my section there were over a hundred people, but only forty people could fit in the courtyard. So forty people entered and walked in a circle in rows, four to a row. We had one hour, so we walked half an hour clockwise and half an hour counter-clockwise. One of the prisoners would clap when half an hour was up and then we'd walk in the opposite direction. As we walked, I thought, *This is the circle of our life, of every day. And when we start at this point, after one hour we will be back at the same point.*

The courtyard was mostly covered, so there was barely any sunlight even on bright days. Most of the prisoners started to feel sick, just from lack of sun. There were some small windows in the hallways outside the rooms, and if you wanted to get sun, you had to go there in the morning. But there was a pecking order. I was new to the prison, and there were older people who had been in jail for twenty years and they were sick, so it was more important for them to be in the sun than me. I didn't really see any sun for over a year.

Slowly, my mind started to bend and adapt to life inside cell walls. Jail is a time for each Palestinian to sit with himself, a time to make an evaluation of his life. And it's an important, powerful experience to have the time to learn and share stories with people in jail.

Sometimes we found somebody sitting by himself in the room with his mind on the outside world, and we knew we had to keep him from feeling alone. If any of us prisoners began to live with our mind outside the jail, we would start to feel down, depressed. So we would give each other a little time to think those thoughts, but if we saw someone looking pensive, we would go to him after maybe half an hour and start joking, discussing things, anything, just to keep him from getting lost within himself.

I was in isolation a few times—sometimes for a few days, sometimes for a week. This could be for something like having contraband, like cell phones. It was very bad in isolation. There was no bed, just a small room with a mat on the floor that you slept on. You had five minutes to go to the bathroom and do what you want, shower, clean—just five minutes. And then you came back to the small cell. Some people spend years in isolation.

There were often conflicts with the guards inside the jail. We would begin to shout or knock on the door and they would come and shoot us with pepper bullets.[17] The bullets cut your skin and the pepper goes in.

The guards searched the room several times each day. When they did these searches, they would bring at least nine or ten soldiers to every room. Sometimes they came just to search. Sometimes they came to bother us. They might come at three in the morning, when we were sleeping. Within a second they'd open the door and nine soldiers would enter with their guns, shouting, "Get down! Put your hands up!"

Still, we were able to hide things sometimes. One thing that was important to us was a cell phone. We used the phone to get news, to talk to our families. At one point, it was my job to hide the phone every evening. We would take it out at six o'clock in the evening and use it until ten, twelve at night, and then hide it. I hid it in a lot of places—for example, we put it in the floor. We cut out a little bit of tile and put it underneath. But you had to be very fast and careful because when the guards came, they searched everything, even the floor sometimes. One time, they brought in a metal detector, and they were able to find our phone that way. They took it, and as punishment they took away visits for two months.

THEY WANTED MY FAMILY TO FEEL LIKE THEY WERE IN JAIL TOO

During the whole time I was under interrogation in Jerusalem, my family had no idea where I was or what was happening to me. Toward the end of my time in Jerusalem, someone who knew me from the camp spotted me as I was being escorted down the halls to or from interrogation. This guy told his mother about me when he got out, and then his mother told my mother where I was. Then my mother and father went to the International Red

Cross to ask for permission to see me.[18] Finally, two months after I was transferred to Be'er Sheva, they came to visit me.

When I first saw them, my mother had been crying. She was behind a pane of glass and we spoke into telephones. It was difficult for me and it was difficult for her, because we knew she was going to leave after forty-five minutes. During the visit I told them, "It's okay, I'm good. We have a big space, and TV, and the food is good. We have meat, we have chicken every day, we have juice, we can drink what we want." And all of that was a lie to make her feel better about the situation. It wasn't easy, because I knew if anybody was released from jail, they would tell her what was really going on. And I knew that she knew I was lying, but she didn't want to say it.

But she wanted to keep my spirits up as well. I kept asking about what was happening outside, and she told me everything was good—this friend was getting married, this one was about to graduate from college. There were a lot of bad things she didn't tell me about. I know she lied because she wanted to give me a nice picture of the outside. So we were lying to each other just to keep each other happy.

My parents came twice a month. It was hard for them to visit the jail. They'd get on the bus at four in the morning and wouldn't arrive until noon, and the visits were only forty-five minutes long. They wouldn't get home until at least seven or eight at night. Sometimes when they came, the prison guards told them, "He's not here, we took him to another jail," or "He's in court." It wasn't true. Once, another prisoner coming back from a visit told me, "Muhanned, your family is waiting outside." I changed my clothes for the visit and waited for my turn. But every time I asked the soldier about it, he said, "Not now, not now." Finally, visiting hours ended and the soldier said, "Your family didn't come." I told him my family was outside, and he went to check. When he came back he told me they had been there, but that they had to leave because visiting time was over.

You know, I didn't want my family to come. I didn't want them to spend all these hours just to come for forty-five minutes and sometimes not even see me. It was a punishment for my family. The Israeli authorities wanted to make my family feel like they were in jail too. So, one night, I used the mobile that we had hidden to tell them not to come anymore.

A couple of months after my parents first started visiting, my two younger brothers were arrested as well. The older of the two was sentenced to two years. He was nineteen. My youngest brother was given administrative detention for a few months—he was just sixteen at the time.[19] I was the first, but my father and mother now say the Israelis have a map of the house since they've visited so many times.

When I was arrested, it was hard for my family. My mom didn't leave the house for a while. But after she came to visit me the first time, she began to meet people and she began to see there were people who would spend all their lives in jail. They had families, wives, and children that they'd never see. So this gave her some perspective. She thought, *My son, at least he will get released*. And she felt the same way about my brothers. I felt the same way, too. There were a lot of people who had twenty-year sentences. So I felt I was just in prison as a tourist.

After a year and a half, in the spring of 2006, I was moved again, this time to the prison in Naqab.[20] There I lived in a tent in the desert for eight months. There'd be maybe twenty of us in each tent, and huge walls around each section of tents. The walls were the same height as the apartheid wall.[21] We were in the desert in June and July, the hottest time of year, under the sun all the time. It was like 104 degrees Fahrenheit, but we were just out in the sun. All the prisoners, they spent their time close to the wall trying to get shade. And there were so many bugs—mosquitoes, bed bugs. It was terrible. The only good thing was the other people, the other prisoners I met.

After the prison in the desert, I was transferred again to Shate Prison, near Nazareth, not long before my release.[22] I spent a few months there. Then finally, in 2007, I was released.

I MADE MY ROOM LOOK LIKE THE ROOM IN JAIL

I knew the date I would be released, but not the place. They released me in Jenin.[23] It was very far from home, and I didn't have any money. I didn't have anything. In 2007, the situation in Jenin was not easy. I borrowed a

phone from a taxi driver to call my family and tell them to come and take me back to Bethlehem.

When I got home, I found a hundred friends, family, and neighbors waiting for me at the camp. All of them wanted to carry me on their shoulders or to hug me. I had spent the last three years speaking and living with a maximum of seven people, and to be around so many people all of a sudden, so much commotion, was overwhelming. I was happy, but it was a little too much. Everyone seemed to be talking at once, and I couldn't focus.

The first day I slept in my own house, I woke up at six in the morning, alone. I had gone to sleep at four or five o'clock in the morning because I was celebrating with my family and friends, but I woke up at six because every day while I was in jail, we woke up at six to do the count.

For three or four months, I wanted to be alone. I didn't want to speak with anybody. I didn't want to meet anybody. I made my room look like the room in jail—I filled it with some boxes to make myself a smaller space, and I had coffee and everything I needed around me in that one room.

Everybody who goes to jail has a lot of problems when they get released. For me, I had trouble speaking with more than one person at the same time, and sometimes I needed a long time to focus on all the details of a conversation. Also, sometimes I had a problem with—I don't know how to say it—feeling secure. For example, if I heard a voice outside, I had to go and see who was talking. If somebody opened the door to my family's house, I had to go and see who it was. Sometimes I'd be sitting in some public space with friends and I'd notice a person sitting behind us, staring at us. My friends, who hadn't been to jail, wouldn't notice that.

But still, I tried to get back into my life. I wasn't as active anymore with friends or politics. But I started school at Abu Dis again in 2008. I was going back to my old art program, the one I'd been in when I was arrested in 2004. My family is educated, as are many people in the camp. Work is not easy to find, and we are not in a normal country. So you must study to have something to do. Having a B.A. here in Palestine is like the same level of qualifications as finishing high school somewhere else. I have four uncles—one has a Ph.D. from Rice University, one has a Ph.D. in education, one is an engineer, the other finished his master's. Two of my aunts are getting their master's. It's the only way to make a living. My twin

sister finished her master's and is working for her Ph.D. So getting a degree was very important to me.

Still, it sometimes felt like the hardest thing in my life to go back to university. I had been out of university for almost five years, and when I came back, all my old friends were gone. People who had been studying with me, they were now my professors at the school. I couldn't spend time with other students to discuss anything because they were five or six years younger than me. They felt the things they were discussing were very important, but I didn't care if I had Ray-Ban sunglasses or how much my watch cost or whatever. So I found a distance between myself and others. To be honest, I skipped a lot of classes.

I wasn't like that before jail. Before jail I was happy and proud to go in the morning to lectures, to attend university. I was proud of the books I was reading. But after jail, I was ashamed. I didn't want anybody to see me going to school. I felt too old and that this time was finished for me.

But I also met someone, a woman who was about six years younger than me named Aghsan. Before long, we got engaged. But for me, having a girlfriend didn't change much—it was still hard to adjust to being out of prison. For the Palestinian, the occupation changes everything, controls everything—your mind, your life. Aghsan is from Ramallah, and it should have taken me one hour to go and visit her coming from Bethlehem. [24] But at the checkpoint, Palestinians are stopped for hours, even if you are just going to meet your girlfriend. At the checkpoint you don't know how long you will stay.[25]

I had to tell the soldiers at the checkpoint that I had been in jail, because if I had not been honest when they asked, they would have checked and it would have been a problem for me. They asked a lot of questions. And sometimes they didn't ask anything, they just told me to get out of my car and made me wait. It depended on the soldier. If the soldier had a problem with his girlfriend, if he was having a bad day, he would make it a bad day for me. So during our engagement I would just go from Bethlehem to Ramallah to see my fiancée for a couple of hours and then head the opposite way to come back, and this was my whole world. After a while, I started to think the story of Romeo and Juliet was easier than my story. I thought, *Why am I in love with a girl in Ramallah? London and Ramallah*

seem like the same distance. Is this really worth it? Sometimes I think the occupation will even stop love.

I also have had trouble at work because of my time in prison. I got a job at an organization called Addameer, a prisoner support and human rights association, a little after I started school.[26] It's difficult for me when I feel I'm under someone else's control. I don't want to be under control. This is a problem I have at work. I don't like signing in every day, having my actions determined by someone else.

I BELIEVE ART IS RESISTANCE

When I came back to university at Abu Dis, I spoke with my art teacher. I told her that I wanted to make art about the jail. She supported me because she said there were few artists like me who had experienced jail, even if there were a lot of artists who made prison the focus of their work. Palestinians and international organizations are always speaking about political prisoners in Palestine. Some Palestinian artists make posters, drawings, paintings, and they often depict prisoners as very big and strong, as guys who can destroy the walls of the jail. But I wanted to do something different. I wanted to speak about prison, about life from the eyes of a prisoner. My art was about how the prisoners see the outside world. I painted the bars of the windows, because that's the view we knew. We never saw a view without the fence, without the windows. And when I went to visit my family, my mother, she was on the other side of the glass. So when I was looking at my mother, I saw my mother, but her face was never completely in view. I've painted glimpses of faces and people and houses and cars on small square canvasses to represent the way the outside world appears to prisoners, seeing the world through these little screens, through small glimpses.

I had an exhibition in London in 2011, and also one in Jerusalem, and a third one in Bethlehem. I am proud of that. But I know these paintings I made, somebody can take them for money and put them in his house and close them up. So the maximum number of people who will see these paintings is ten people, twenty people. But I believe that art is for all levels of society. I am from a refugee camp, and I am drawing for the poor people

in Palestine, not for the bourgeoisie. I'm not doing a painting to keep it inside the house.

After I was released from jail, I started doing graffiti. Sometimes I and a couple of other artists used stencils, because we did a lot of painting in places where we are not allowed to paint, so we had to go fast. I did graffiti in the main street to let everybody see the drawing.[27]

I believe art is resistance. The graffiti in Palestine, it's not like the graffiti in any other place in the world. Because when you write something on the wall, this means it has a connection with the First Intifada and the revolutionary time.

When I make my art, it feels that I am giving something to my homeland and sending my message to the rest of the world. I paint because I'm speaking for thousands of people nobody knows about—the people in jail. Many of them have been living for thirty years or more in jail. Few people speak for or about them. There are 12,000 people incarcerated in military jails. Why people don't know about them, I don't know.

If you live in Palestine, you have big problems—much pain, much suffering. I am painting to change that, to help ease the pain. Many of us are not fighting with guns, but we find our own way to resist. We may lose our lives or freedom, but we are working for the lives of our next generation.

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[1] Naji Al-Ali (1938–1987) was a political cartoonist who criticized Palestinian politicians and the state of Israel. A recurring character in his artwork was Handala, a faceless ten-year-old Palestinian boy whose story represented the Palestinian refugee experience.

[2] Members of the Al-Azzah family had been leaders in the region of their former village ever since revolting against Ottoman rule in the nineteenth century. After many of the residents in their community fled to Bethlehem in 1948, the refugee camp was named after them, in recognition of their prominence. For more on the Arab-Israeli War and Nakba, see Appendix I, page 295.

[3] For more on the two-state solution, see the Glossary, page 304.

[4] Beit Jibrin was an Arab village located thirteen miles northwest of Hebron and twenty-five miles southwest of Jerusalem. Before 1948, the population was a little under 3,000. The village was depopulated during Israeli raids in the 1948 war, and there is currently an Israeli settlement on its former location called Beit Guvrin.

[5] For more information on the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, see the Glossary, page 304.

[6] For more on the Oslo Accords, see the Glossary, page 304.

[7] The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) was formed in 1967. For more information, see the Glossary, page 304.

[8] The "right of return" refers to a political position that Palestinian refugees and their descendants should be permitted to reclaim land and property that they were driven from in the wars in 1948 and 1967. For more information, see the Glossary, page 304.

[9] For more information on Hamas, Fatah, and the Palestinian Liberation Organization, see the Glossary, page 304.

[10] The First Intifada was an uprising throughout the West Bank and Gaza against Israeli military occupation. It began in December 1987 and lasted until 1993. *Intifada* in Arabic means "to shake off." For more information, see Appendix I, page 295.

[11] Palestinians use the term "martyr" generally for anyone killed by Israelis, not necessarily someone who died while fighting. Although originally a religious term, it is now used by religious and secular Palestinians alike.

[12] Al-Quds is a university system with three campuses in the West Bank, including one in the city of Abu Dis, which together serve over 13,000 undergraduates. Abu Dis is a city of around 12,000 people just east of Jerusalem. *Al-Quds* is the Arabic name of the city of Jerusalem.

[13] Muhanned is referring to the art and culture from Spain during the 800 years when it was under Muslim influence. In 710, Islamic armies succeeded in conquering large areas of Spain within a short span of years. The conquerors gave the country the name Al-Andalus.

[14] Al-Muskubiya ("the Russian Compound") is a large compound in Jerusalem that was built in the nineteenth century to house an influx of Russian Orthodox pilgrims into the city during the time of Ottoman rule. It now houses a major interrogation center and lockup as well as courthouses and other Israeli government buildings.

[15] Up to this point, Muhanned was being held in administrative detention, a system that allows Israel to indefinitely detain Palestinians without specific charges. For more information, see the Glossary, page 304.

[16] Eshel Prison, near the Israeli city of Be'er Sheva, is a maximum-security facility that was opened in 1970. Be'er Sheva is a city of over 200,000 people located sixty miles southwest of Jerusalem.

[17] Pepper-spray projectiles are weapons sometimes used to incapacitate and control crowds. Each projectile ball fired from the weapon contains chemicals such as capsicum, which is also used in pepper spray. Though they are intended to be non-lethal, deaths have been reported from the use of pepper-spray projectiles.

[18] The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is an organization that monitors prisoner rights around the world, among other functions. For more information on the divisions of the Red Cross/Red Crescent, see the Glossary, page 304.

[19] For more on administrative detention, see the Glossary, page 304.

[20] The Ktzi'ot Prison is a large, open-air prison camp in the vast Negev desert (Naqab desert in Arabic), located forty-five miles southwest of Be'er Sheva. Ktzi'ot was opened in 1988 and closed in 1995 after the end of the First Intifada, and then reopened in 2002 during the Second Intifada. According to Human Rights Watch, one out of every fifty West Bank and Gazan males over the age of sixteen was held at Ktzi'ot in 1990, during the middle of the First Intifada.

[21] This is a reference to the barrier wall separating Israel from the occupied Palestinian territories, which in many places is twenty to twenty-six feet high and made of triple-reinforced concrete.

[22] Shate Prison (*shate* means "hot pepper" in Arabic) was opened in 1952 and houses 800 prisoners.

[23] Jenin is a city of almost 50,000 people on the northern border of the West Bank. It's located over sixty miles north of Bethlehem.

[24] Ramallah is the de facto administrative capital of Palestine. It is about thirteen miles north of Bethlehem.

[25] For more on checkpoints within Palestine, see the Glossary, page 304.

[26] Addameer is a nonprofit organization working to protect the rights of Palestinian prisoners. *Addameer* means "conscience" in Arabic.

[27] Most of Muhanned's murals are done with the permission, and even at the request, of the property owners.

PROTESTERS NEAR BIL’IN, WEST BANK

TALI SHAPIRO

English-Hebrew translator, 31
Born in Mevaseret Zion, Israel
Interviewed in Ramallah, West Bank

The West Bank village of Bil'in is located two miles east of the Green Line demarcation boundary and twelve miles west of Ramallah. It's well known for weekly protests against the occupation of the West Bank and the construction of the West Bank barrier wall.

Construction of the West Bank barrier began before the Second Intifada, and the proposed route of the wall crossed through the western edge of Bil'in, effectively annexing a broad swath of land that included private property and much of the village's grazing land. In 2005, people from the village began protesting every Friday afternoon against the incursion into village lands. These regular protests quickly became a focal point of the Palestinian protest movement, with hundreds showing up each week from throughout the West Bank, Israel, and the international community. Celebrities and international leaders have joined in the protests, from Richard Branson to Jimmy Carter. Human rights lawyers have taken up the cause as well, and in 2007, Israeli courts ordered that the wall be dismantled and moved closer to the Green Line, stating that there was no pressing security concern to justify the route of the wall through Bil'in. That same year, however, Israeli courts declared legal the construction of thousands of additional buildings in the Israeli settlement of Modi'in Illit that would occupy land privately held by residents of Bil'in. The territory between Bil'in and the Green Line remains strongly contested.

Tali Shapiro has been attending these protests since 2009. We meet Tali at a weekly protest amid a barrage of teargas and percussion grenades. She wears jeans and a T-shirt with a bandanna around her neck, and she passes out alcohol wipes to soothe the eyes and sinuses of people unfortunate enough to get a face full of noxious gas.

Tali agrees to meet with us later at a café in Ramallah. Ramallah is in Area A, and Tali is legally forbidden to visit as a citizen of Israel.[1] *However, like many other Israelis, she seems to be able to enter the city without too much trouble from Israeli or Palestinian Authority police. In fact, when we speak to her again in 2014, Tali explains that she has relocated to Ramallah, a move she'd been planning for years.*

AS A KID I WAS VERY SHELTERED

My parents were born in Israel. Their grandparents came from Poland, Russia, Ukraine, and Lithuania. I was born in 1983 in Mevaseret Zion, a suburb of Jerusalem.[2] I have one brother, Benjamin, who is a few years older than me. My parents worked in medicine—my father was an anesthesiologist, and my mother was a psychiatric nurse. We were in Israel for the first five years of my life, and then we moved to the States, to Seattle, for two years while my father had a residency there.

Living outside of Israel gave me perspective. Before living in the U.S., I'd never had questions about who I was or where I was from. One of the things I specifically remember in the States was the Pledge of Allegiance. Having to stand up every morning and pledge allegiance to a flag that was not my own was very suspicious to me. I'd think, *Oh wait, I can't really do this, can I?* But then, interestingly—and I was around seven years old at the time—I began to think, *If I feel strange pledging allegiance to this flag, what should I be feeling when I sing the Hatikva?*[3]

And then after Seattle, we came back to live in a small town called Omer, outside Be'er Sheva.[4] Omer is a really affluent town, maybe one of the three wealthiest in Israel. It was really lovely and really boring—pleasant, a lot of greenery, all the houses pretty much the same. There wasn't much to do, but it was a nice place to grow up.

As a kid, I was very sheltered. There were so many terrible things going on all around, but my parents shielded me from confronting anything difficult or complicated. For example, my mother wouldn't take me to funerals when relatives died, because she didn't even want me to see that. And my family had this history of being part of the Zionist movement. My grandparents helped start towns—they had streets named after them. So I grew up in this sheltered, patriotic world. So much in our culture was about Israel, Israeli security. During holidays, I remember teachers sending us home with little chocolates with Israeli flags sticking out of them.

And everyone loved soldiers. Everyone had been a soldier and therefore a hero—my mom, my dad, uncles, aunts, everyone.[5] We were fed the idea in school and in the media that by the time my generation was old enough, there wouldn't be a need for everyone to do military service, that it was just a temporary problem that would be solved. That isn't something you hear anymore, but when I was growing up in the nineties, after the Oslo Accords, there was this idea that Israel wouldn't need this big military any longer.[6]

IT'S SORT OF LIKE SUMMER CAMP WITH GUNS

As a teenager, I didn't really think about military service that much. I was just a typical bored teen in a small town. And I didn't understand the politics of the situation at all. I'd hear terms like "settlers" in the media from time to time, but I think girls, especially, were shielded from knowing about those sorts of issues. I didn't really know what a "settler" was, even in high school.

At age sixteen I got my draft registration in the mail. I was confronted with the possibility for the first time that I'd probably have to be a soldier. The way the registration order works is that you start going through the process of figuring out what sort of unit you'll be in, in what capacity you'll be serving. I got a pretty sad-ass order that basically let me know I was going to be a secretary or something, while some of my friends were going to be scouts out in the wilderness or doing other assignments I viewed as interesting at the time. When I was sixteen, my school took us to Gadna

camp for a week.[7] It was part of a standardized school program, and something that most Israeli teens do—it's sort of like summer camp with guns. We stayed in tents in the desert and female IDF officers taught us how to take apart a rifle, took us to the firing range, things like that. So at sixteen I was handed this rifle on a school field trip. It was my first experience with a weapon. It was big, greasy, and heavy—a killing machine. But I still got into the challenge of the shooting range.

Then, right after I turned eighteen, around 2000, I enlisted. Up until then I wasn't sure if I'd have to serve or not. Only about 40 percent of the Israeli population ends up serving, even if everyone is supposed to enlist. So what happens is you're in a situation where you don't want to do it. But you feel an obligation to do it, there's social pressure to do it. It's considered very selfish within Israeli society if you refuse to serve in the army. People just look at you like, oh, you're just a big baby. You're a traitor if you don't serve.

My one month of basic training was done in the north, near Haifa. Basic training was a strange experience. It didn't seem like we were learning anything. Other than practicing at the firing range, we were just dealing with the discipline of day-to-day life, like making our beds the right way, dressing the right way, handling kitchen duty. We all slept in tents in the cold weather and ran a bit during the days. We'd get yelled at if we messed up and would have to run extra laps. I think basic was a little easier for me, because I wasn't going to be assigned to combat duty. Like I said, I was selected to be a secretary.

After my month of basic training, I was transferred in September to the biggest military base in Gaza at the time, which was right on the edge of Khan Younis.[8] I served during the Second Intifada.[9] I remember the sounds of shots fired and explosions all through the night. We would be up all night trying to figure out if the explosions came from "us" or "them." If it was "us" then it would calm us down. In the base, rumors were a way of life. The rumors kept us scared. The most prevalent rumor that was allowed to spread in the base was that "Arabs were about to take over the base"—and this was the biggest military base in Gaza!

I remember the rumble of buildings collapsing. When a building collapses it's a huge explosion. The first time I heard the sound, there we

were eight girls in a room at night, and we all woke up thinking, *Are we going to die?* But little did we know these were explosions that our army caused. It could be so loud, it was hard to feel like I wasn't in danger, even though I wasn't involved in combat. In fact, most enlisted female soldiers weren't allowed to carry weapons—only female officers and female field medics. I remember a commanding officer saying that female soldiers with guns were more likely to cause damage than do anything useful. That seemed like a pretty common attitude in the military.

I still didn't understand the political situation then. For instance, my understanding at the time was that some crazy people decided to jump the border out of Israel, and then the military had to send people out to protect them. It took me a few weeks to realize these were the settlers I was hearing about on the radio all the time. My thought was, *Why don't we just pull back, and then the settlers will pull back too?* It just all seemed weird to me, mostly.

REALITY CAME TO ME IN SMALL OBSERVATIONS

I was stationed in Gaza for one year and eight months. Most of my days were fairly routine, actually. I'd file personnel reports every morning on who was on the base, who was off the base, what they were doing. And then after doing that, I'd still have time to go eat, work out in the gym, take a nap, read. I'd see friends who were out of the base for fourteen hours and simply exhausted. Meanwhile, I was just trying to fill up my days, feeling stuck in a mundane routine.

But a few moments are embedded in my mind—I guess they were in the back of my head until I could deal with them. We were stationed on a hill that was overlooking the beach, and there was a dirt road where the kids would go to school. So I'd see them, you know, walking hand in hand or running to catch a ride to school and I remember thinking, *That's the enemy? Hmmmm, okay.*

And then another moment was when I was at the border crossing, waiting for my ride home, and there was this Palestinian guy on his knees without his shirt on. He was cuffed with his hands behind his head. And there were other soldiers who were pushing him into the jeep rather

roughly. I immediately assumed that he did something really bad, and this was normal procedure during an arrest. Today when I look back at this incident, I have other questions. *Was he beaten, was he stripped to humiliate him?* So reality came to me in small observations.

And I remember one surreal moment later in my service. An officer who I wrote reports for had a map of Khan Younis spread out on his desk. One day, he called over his deputy and asked how many houses we demolished that year. The deputy told him that we were up to 297 houses. So the officer took a black marker and made three Xs on the map. He showed his deputy the marks and said something like, "It's almost the end of the year. Let's do a few more and round it up to a nice, even 300."

Nobody ever said anything about the morality of what we were doing. I think most soldiers were really just preoccupied with how shitty life was. Because the army was like prison, with occasional leave to go home. But it's high-discipline bullshit that you're preoccupied with, wearing the uniform correctly, doing dishes, having to work from morning to night.

I JUST WANTED TO DO SOMETHING TO STOP THE WAR

After my military service was up at the end of 2002, I moved back home with my parents for most of 2003. I was just trying to figure out what to do with my life, how to get out of Omer. I applied to a fine arts program in Tel Aviv and was accepted, so I moved there to start school in the fall of 2003.

For the three years I was in school, I didn't think about politics much—I was just focused on my art. But in my last year, I switched from fine arts to animation, and I started a relationship with another student in my program. He was much more political than I was. He challenged everything that I had grown up believing. At home, at school, in the media, in the army, in college. Everything. We probably had a political conversation every day for the three years we were together, just naturally while watching the news on television or reading the paper. I didn't know it at the time, but I slowly started to move away from the sort of blind patriotism I'd grown up with.

During this time I was also trying to make a life in Tel Aviv. I was able to make some money selling prints of my art, and I also supported myself by doing online marketing work. I remember a documentary I saw that was

made by the BBC. The larger narrative in the documentary was about activists and journalists that had been killed by the Israeli military—Rachel Corrie, Tom Hurndall, James Miller.[10] At one point in the documentary, there was a story about a twelve-year-old girl who was shot in the head by an Israeli soldier while she was sitting in class during the Second Intifada. The girl went into a coma, but miraculously survived the shooting, and the documentarians were there in the hospital at the moment when she regained consciousness. They captured the moment when she opened her eyes and she realized that she'd been blinded by the shooting. I remembered what I was like at twelve, and I just couldn't separate myself from her. Then a little later in the documentary, the filmmakers interviewed the commanding officer of the unit responsible for shooting the girl, and I recognized the officer as one of my former commanders. I realized that I had served in that unit around the time the girl was shot. I didn't understand my feelings at the time, but it was the first time I had felt this emotional sense of responsibility in some way for what the state of Israel was doing.

I broke up with my partner in 2008. Then late in 2008, Cast Lead came.[11] When the media started reporting that it was likely that Israel would invade Gaza, I started having a panic attack. I felt like a caged animal. I just knew a lot of people were about to die. And then when the invasion happened, and I watched it all unfold on the news, I felt I was going crazy. I just wanted to do something to stop the killing. I suddenly found I couldn't do my art any more. It just didn't seem important. I joined a protest march against Cast Lead in Tel Aviv, but it didn't feel like I was doing enough.

A few weeks after Cast Lead began, my ex called me up and he said, "Hey, you want to go to Bil'in?"[12] By that time I had already seen the protests from the village on YouTube, and I said, "I'm scared shitless, but hell yeah." The one thing that was on my mind was that I wanted to meet the people in those protests.

So I started coming to the West Bank in 2009. We used to meet at Levinsky Park in Tel Aviv to ride to the protests.[13] Just going to the park and starting to talk to the other activists there, I knew I was where I belonged. We went to Bil'in every Friday—that's when the protests against

the wall took place. There was a lot of tension in the West Bank at the time because of the operation in Gaza. Soldiers were tighter on the trigger. But what I remember first about the protests in Bil'in is just what a festive atmosphere it was. There was dancing, joking. It felt like a celebration—of resistance, of continued existence. The protest I'd gone to in Tel Aviv was solemn, serious, like a funeral. It was respectful, but I much preferred the celebration of life in Bil'in as a form of resistance.

In Bil'in, the protests at the wall were intense. Teargas, rubber bullets. Of course I knew something about what was going to happen. I'd seen videos of the weekly protests, and I'd been carefully briefed about the dangers by other protesters. But being there in person, I felt so vulnerable. Probably the most important thing for me about those first few trips to Bil'in were just meeting Palestinians, talking to them. Their situation went straight to my heart.

I'VE BEEN ARRESTED PROBABLY TWENTY TIMES

I've been to the weekly protests throughout the West Bank over 250 times now. I go just about every week, unless there's a family wedding or other big event I have to be part of. Before activism, I felt I just had a complete estrangement from the world. And now I feel deeply part of it, as complex as it is. So now at least I have some kind of context to who I am and where I belong.

Getting to Bil'in was never much of a problem. We'd often go by car, and since we're not Arabs we'd just pass through the checkpoints back to '48, like any settler coming from the West Bank could.[14] Only three or four times over the last five years have any soldiers at checkpoints going into '48 boarded the bus and checked everyone's IDs. Lucky for me, I have two passports—my Israeli passport, and also a European one. I have Polish citizenship, passed down from my grandfather, and if I need to I show the European passport to checkpoint guards to help me get into areas restricted to Israelis.

When we get to Bil'in, we start by congregating in the center of the village. Then we start marching toward the wall. Usually, we don't have the chance to start demonstrating at the wall, because the army will start

dispersing us even before chanting begins. And the dispersal is brutal. Most commonly, it's through teargas. It's a terrible experience, the choking, the sore eyes, the whole thing. It's an extreme physical experience. I think after four, five, six times, you kind of become emotionally desensitized—you're prepared to get gassed. But physically, you never get used to it.

I've been arrested probably twenty times. The soldiers treat me differently, because I'm female, because I'm small, because I seem feminine. I use these things to my own ends—I'm kind of reaping the rewards of machismo. As a woman, I feel I should shield the men, because many times they get treated very brutally, and if I'm there, then it de-escalates the situation. Sometimes I can keep men from being arrested—not just Palestinians, but also Israeli and international men as well. My presence helps ease tensions sometimes.

I've seen some terrible things, though. Beatings happen often. And sometimes people are hit by teargas canisters. That's one of the ways people are killed during protests. A friend named Iyad was hit in the face by a canister once. He wasn't even that close to where it was fired, but it crushed his face. I didn't see it happen, but I saw him getting dragged to an ambulance. His face was bloody—I couldn't even recognize him, other than his clothes. He survived, but he has a big Y-shaped dent in his forehead now, and he has issues with memory loss.

I remember another friend, a young Israeli guy, who was struck in the knee with a canister, and his kneecap was broken. It hurt him a lot—he was writhing in pain when he was struck, but we decided not to take him to an ambulance, because he didn't want to get arrested. After the protest, he basically grew a second knee while we were driving home—it was that swollen. We ended up calling his mother and meeting in the parking lot of an IKEA. She had no idea he was at the protest and would have been very much against it. She was calm about it, but I think quite worried, and after he was treated at the hospital, she gave him a lot of shit about being part of that kind of protest.

A lot of Israeli protesters have trouble with their parents. In my twenties I told them I was bisexual, and that was easier than telling them that I was a leftist, or later that I was dating an Arab man. My parents are definitely not supportive of my politics, but they support me, so I can say both sides are making courageous strides at achieving peace. We all make an effort. And

I've never been injured or spent any real time in jail, so they haven't had to face that sort of thing yet.

Even though I go to weekly protests, I don't necessarily think protests are the most effective action. I think boycotts are a lot more useful in terms of leverage on the Israeli government.[15] But it's important for me to meet people face to face and understand what's going on in the West Bank and make friends. And I think it's good for forming relationships of trust, based on an agreement that Palestinian rights are being infringed upon.

I FEEL MORE LIKE I CAN BE MYSELF IN RAMALLAH THAN IN TEL AVIV

For years I planned to move to Ramallah. Then I finally did it at the start of 2014. I had a lot of reasons for making the move. For one, my partner is here. And I'm closer now to the protests. I'm learning Arabic, and living in Ramallah really helps me pick it up quickly.

I still go back to Israel every couple weeks, to visit friends in Tel Aviv or to see my family in Omer, because there's no way they're coming to visit me here. My brother has a new baby, and everything else pales in comparison to how important it is for me to be in her life as she grows up. I'll always get a little nervous at checkpoints, because I have a "security record," but I never have any real problems. And I haven't had any issues in Ramallah because of my Israeli citizenship. I don't go around telling everyone I'm Israeli, but I don't try to hide it either. For the most part, I feel like my life here is completely normal. I go shopping in the market, I'm comfortable in the streets. There are moments here when I'll meet someone new, maybe with a group of friends, and I'll talk to them for a while and they'll think I'm nice. Then I tell them I'm Israeli, and they sort of have to recalibrate a little. But I still feel comfortable here. It's a little ironic because I'm hiding my identity a bit in Ramallah, but I feel more like I can be myself here than I can in Tel Aviv.

[1] Area A territories are administered and policed by the Palestinian Authority. For more information on Areas A, B, and C, see the Glossary, page 304.

[2] Mevaseret Zion is a city of 25,000 located six miles west of Jerusalem.

[3] The *Hatikva* is the Israeli national anthem.

[4] Omer is a suburb of over 7,000 northeast of Be'er Sheva. Be'er Sheva is a city of over 200,000 south of Jerusalem.

[5] Military service starting at age eighteen is compulsory for most Israeli citizens. For more on the Israeli Defense Force, see the Glossary, page 304.

[6] The Oslo Accords marked the end of the First Intifada and established a tentative plan for Palestinian governance of the West Bank and Gaza. For more information, see the Glossary, page 304.

[7] *Gadna* is short for *Gdudei No'ar*, or "youth battalions." The Gadna tradition dates back to before the formation of Israel as a state.

[8] Khan Younis is a city of over 250,000 residents in southern Gaza. It's the second largest city in the Gaza Strip behind Gaza City.

[9] The Second Intifada was also known as the Al-Aqsa Intifada. It was the first major conflict between Israel and Palestine following the Oslo accords, and it lasted from 2000 to 2005. For more information on the Intifadas, see Appendix I, page 295.

[10] Rachel Corrie was an American pro-Palestinian activist who was killed by the Israeli military in Rafah in 2003 during the Second Intifada. She was crushed to death by a bulldozer while trying to defend a Palestinian man's home from demolition. Tom Hurndall was a British photography student who was shot by an Israeli sniper in Rafah in 2003 (after a nine month coma he died in 2004). James Miller was a British filmmaker who was shot and killed by Israeli military in Rafah in 2003. The story of the three deaths is investigated in the BBC documentary *When Killing is Easy* (2003).

[11] Operation Cast Lead was a military invasion of Gaza from December 2008 to January 2009 in what Israel claims was a response to rocket fire into Israel and the militarization of Hamas. Approximately 1,400 Palestinians were killed during the invasion. For more information, see Appendix I, page 295.

[12] Bil'in is a village of around 1,800 people located thirty miles east of Tel Aviv.

[13] Levinsky Park is located in south Tel Aviv. The surrounding neighborhood is home to many North African immigrant communities.

[14] Palestinian activists often refer to the state of Israel as "'48" as a way to protest the borders claimed by Israel after its declared statehood and subsequent military occupations.

[15] The Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement (BDS) is an international campaign to apply political and economic pressure on Israel to end the military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza.

UNRWA MURAL IN RAMALLAH, WEST BANK

KIFAH QATASH

Homemaker, student, 42
Born in Al-Bireh, West Bank
Interviewed in Ramallah, West Bank

Both Kifah Qatash and her sister Hanan love black coffee. Their ritual is to make a big pot and then sit on the overstuffed sofas in Hanan's living room in Ramallah and talk late into the evening while drinking cup after bitter cup. It is in that same living room and with that same coffee pot that we sit down with Kifah for her interview. She speaks mostly in English, with Hanan translating when she falters.

Kifah was born and raised in the neighboring city of Al-Bireh. Although it is called Ramallah's twin, Al-Bireh is calm and traditional compared to Ramallah's crush and bustle. Al-Bireh is a largely Muslim community with elegant nineteenth-century Palestinian houses made of local white limestone. It hosts a sizeable community of refugee families, including Kifah's family.[1] *Though now peaceful and sedate, Al-Bireh has not always been so. Kifah lived through the two Intifadas there, which meant years of Israeli soldiers on the streets, imposing curfews and raiding houses. Though she's built a life in Al-Bireh, Kifah longs to return to Yazur, the village her family fled in 1948, although she has only seen it during a few short visits as a child.*

When we meet, Kifah is dressed simply in a black abaya and white head scarf.[2] *She is quiet but speaks with a clear self-assuredness, and is quick to laugh. Kifah is looked up to as a leader in her community through her years of working on behalf of prisoner rights. She believes that this advocacy*

work, along with her leadership in a network of Palestinian activists in her mosque, may have brought her to the attention of the Palestinian Authority. The Palestinian Authority is especially concerned about the rise of fundamentalist and Islamist political factions such as Hamas, the party that won elections in the Gaza Strip in 2006 and subsequently drove Fatah—the party that controls the PA—out of Gaza. Kifah believes that information likely passed from the PA to Israeli police led to a raid on her home in 2008, and to her arrest in 2010. She was imprisoned for a year without charges.

I'D WATCH EVERYTHING THROUGH THE WINDOW

My family is originally from Yazur Village,[3] but I was born in Al-Bireh.[4] I still live in Al-Bireh. It has affected me hugely that I'm not on the land that my family once owned in Yazur. I still want to return to my village someday.

When I was a child, it wasn't always easy being a refugee in Al-Bireh. On the one hand, people loved us. They saw refugees as an important part of Palestinian history. At the same time, the residents of Al-Bireh were sort of a closed community. A lot of landlords wouldn't rent to refugees—only to people who were from the town. And in a lot of cases, girls from refugee families had a hard time marrying boys from Al-Bireh families. Those families wouldn't be interested in having their sons marry refugees. When I was a child, we were actually one of the few refugee families in Al-Bireh. My father had moved here from the refugee camps near Ramallah after he started a carpentry business here. Later, he started a small grocery as well. But refugees were rare then—now we're more common in Al-Bireh.

Still, Al-Bireh was not a bad place to grown up. It was very quiet. The neighborhood we lived in was peaceful. I was the third child—I had an older sister, older brother, and two younger sisters. My older sister, Hanan, was a year older than me, and we were best friends. We played in the hills nearby, we rode our bikes, climbed trees, played charades. We played with the neighbors. It was safe, and we felt free. We could even stay out at night. My parents wanted to make us feel like we had a normal life. They had

grown up in the camps, and life was much harder for them there—especially my father, who is deaf.

When I was a child, I was most aware of the occupation when my family traveled out of Al-Bireh. Travel was difficult. For example, when I was a young child, my family would often visit relatives in Nablus.[5] Quite often, we would start our journey to Nablus, and all of a sudden, we'd hit a roadblock set up by Israeli soldiers.[6] They'd stop our car and send us back the way we came. So they deprived me of those visits, and that really affected me, especially when I was a child. But I remember visiting the site where Yazur had been. There weren't any homes there any more—it was an industrial zone. That affected me as well, to see that this place where my grandparents used to have a big home was now a bunch of factories.

From what I remember, there were always Israeli settlers around, though we didn't have a big settlement near us until 1981. That's when the Psagot settlement was built up.[7] But when I was a child, it didn't seem like such an exceptional thing. We'd see settlers pass through town because we shared a main road. For the most part, we didn't worry too much about the settlers or about Israel.

Then, when I was a teenager, the First Intifada started, and things changed rapidly, even in our quiet neighborhood in Al-Bireh.[8] Suddenly, we could expect to hear of friends or neighbors who were killed by soldiers. We had to worry that soldiers would come in the middle of the night. When they wanted to find someone, soldiers would break into houses in the middle of the night—sometimes they'd break into everyone's house in the neighborhood. I was curious, and I'd watch everything through the window. My older sister, she was more afraid, and she said she refused to see young men being humiliated in the street. Sometimes soldiers would arrest men and have them strip down to their underwear in the middle of the road. Sometimes soldiers would laugh at the men, make them sing songs. Our house was on one of the main streets in town, so we had this happening outside our window quite a lot.

Sometimes the soldiers would make every male in the neighborhood come out of their house. I remember my brother being forced into the street, and he was still just a child. For more than a month after the Intifada

started, there was a curfew—we couldn't leave the house even to go to the garden. My father ran a mini-mart on the ground floor of our building, and we were afraid to even go downstairs to get things to eat. We knew if soldiers saw us through the windows, they could do anything—we could be taken. Anyway, that's what we were afraid of as girls. And it wasn't just soldiers. Armed settlers from Psagot, men in civilian clothes, would be in the streets as well. Suddenly, we realized just how close Psagot was to us, and just how scary it was to have a settlement so close.

As the Intifada continued over the years, I started to get more involved. I started to go to demonstrations. During that time when demonstrations happened against the occupation, it could seem like everyone dropped what they were doing to join—people would leave work, strike, whatever. The same with students. We'd march out of the classrooms for demonstrations sometimes.

When I was around sixteen, I was at school one day, and we heard about a big demonstration that was happening in town. Many students got up and started walking out of the building to join in. But when we got to the front entrance of the school, a captain from the Israeli army was there blocking the way, trying to lock up the school. He didn't want us students in the streets.

I filled up a bucket with water, marched up to the captain, and soaked him with it. He got mad. He arrested me and brought me to his jeep. Then he drove around with me handcuffed in the back seat. He said he was going to exile me from Palestine for what I did to him! We drove through Al-Bireh and Ramallah for maybe four hours while he patrolled, and then he took me to the police station where they called my parents. At the time, it was rare for girls to be in demonstrations or out in the streets. When I saw my parents, they told me that friends and neighbors had been calling them all day, saying that they saw me in the back of an Israeli Jeep! It was unusual then to see a female get arrested. I think my parents were probably more scared than I was. I just felt like the Intifada was in my blood. It was my duty to resist.

WE WOULD DRAG THE MEN BACK

The empty half of the glass is that the occupation is crazy. But the good half, the full half, is that I met my husband, Hazem, and got to know him because of the occupation. He was my brother's friend. It was in the early nineties, during the Intifada. My brother had come back from abroad, and he'd invited his friend Hazem to our house for a visit. Because our house was on the main street in town, there were Israeli soldiers constantly in the road. Palestinian boys would throw stones at the soldiers in their tanks from windows, and the soldiers would sometimes come down from their tanks to search the houses for the boys who struck their tanks. So just as Hazem was arriving at our house for a visit one day, some Israeli soldiers stopped him and started to arrest him.

It wasn't uncommon during the Intifada for girls and women to try and stop arrests—it was rare for soldiers to arrest or beat up women. So women would sometimes try to intervene, argue, and drag men who were getting arrested into their houses. So I went out to help when I saw Hazem get picked up by the soldiers. Just as I started to argue, the soldiers let him go. So it was that moment when he saw me helping him, endangering myself for him, that he noticed me. And after a couple of months, he came to my family and proposed. I ended up leaving school just before graduating to marry Hazem.

We got married in 1992, when I was around eighteen, and I had a son in 1993 named Moad and a daughter in 1994 named Duha. My husband studied at a vocational school, and he got a job as a maintenance man at a factory in Ramallah that made sweets, cookies, chocolates, that sort of thing. It took me some time to learn to cook, but I eventually became very good at it.

Marriage didn't really change me in terms of activism. Not a bit. I went to demonstrations even after I was married. One thing that did slow me down, though, was that I was diagnosed with lupus when I was twenty-six. I was pregnant, and I had a miscarriage. When I went to the hospital for tests, that's when they discovered that something was wrong. I would get pain in my hands and feet, and swelling sometimes as well.[9] The pain was constant, and the doctors tried a lot of medicines and did a lot of tests before they diagnosed me with lupus. The pain was especially bad in cold weather. Doctors tried to treat it, but the pain didn't go away. I had to

develop tricks to deal with the pain, just to keep going. I had to have faith in God. I stayed involved too—I could take my mind off the pain by seeing friends, seeing family, being out in the community.

After the First Intifada and the Oslo Accords were signed, the Palestinian Authority took over.[10] There were fewer demonstrations, and I also had my kids, so I wasn't as involved in street protests. But through our mosque, I started getting to know people whose family members had been killed in the Intifada, and many who had family members still in prison. So between the First Intifada and the Second Intifada, I spent a lot of time helping families who had been affected by the conflict. A lot of us did—we all felt it was right to help each other. That's when I started getting involved with prisoner rights. I would go and see the families of prisoners to make sure they were doing well. So many young men were arrested in the Intifada, and it was really hard on the families. This is one of the things that helped keep me active and involved even after I was diagnosed with lupus.

I was involved in supporting families with prisoners especially after the start of the Second Intifada in 2000, and I became very well known in Al-Bireh and Ramallah. I got out as much as I could. I couldn't do everything around the house that I wanted because of my disease, but luckily, my family helped out so much. My husband helped to take care of the house when I couldn't, and my two kids were helpful from a young age as well. So I did my best to maintain my home, and I stayed involved in the community as much as I could as well.

I BECAME A SUSPECT

I am 100 percent sure that the Israeli police target religious people like me. If you want to go to the mosque and pray, that's okay with Israeli soldiers. But after prayer in the mosque, I like to sit down and listen to a lesson or lecture and Islamic teachings. If it's a lesson in the mosque about women's issues, such as our periods, that's okay. But if I wanted to learn something about what's happening in Egypt or another political issue, for the Israelis, that's not okay. Islam has two parts—your relationship with God, and your relationship with society. So if you want to focus on your relationship with God and pray, that's okay. But once you focus on your relationship with

society, that's not okay, and it will probably get you noticed by the authorities. I think any mosque where there are lectures about politics—whether about Palestine or other Islamic countries like Egypt or Syria—Israeli authorities will be suspicious about what's going on there.

Israel is an occupying country, and the most important thing for them is security. Therefore, if they suspect for a split second that someone is active against Israel, they don't hesitate to go and arrest them. I think between my work with prisoners and my attendance at political lectures in the mosque, PA or Israeli police started to monitor me. The Israelis don't want anyone to have anything to do with the prisoners because they want to cut the prisoners off from the community. So if you're working on behalf of the prisoners, giving comfort to them, you become suspected as being someone working against Israel. So I became a suspect.

And unfortunately, the Palestinian Authority is actually the same way. I think sometimes they take their lead from the Israeli government in monitoring what goes on in mosques. This is especially true since Hamas took over in Gaza.[11] The PA supervises lectures and monitors what gets said at mosques in the West Bank. They don't want a religious party like Hamas to gain influence. They even target young men just for going to the mosque too much. They'll watch and see who goes to the mosque in between the five daily prayer times. If they see people talking at the mosque in between prayer times, the PA will wonder if they're conspiring to do something bad. They see Islam as a threat.

In 2005, there were municipal elections throughout the West Bank, and many of the families I worked with encouraged me to run for office in Al-Bireh. I submitted my name under the Change and Reform List.[12] The party I was running with was interested in challenging Fatah, which controlled the PA. We thought they were too corrupt. I didn't win the elections, but running for office made me more visible to authorities, I think.

The PA was worried about religion and politics, about Hamas, and about any challenge to their power. Sometime after the election, I began hearing from people I knew at the mosque that PA authorities had been asking questions about me. In fact, they seemed very interested in the network of women in the mosque who stayed connected to prisoners and

worked with families of martyrs. I wasn't the only person they were asking about.

Around that time, I decided to go back to school. First, I had to pass the tawjihi exams, and I had to be disciplined about studying material I'd been away from for so long.[13] It was hard. I had my sister, who was a teacher, help me study. I passed in 2006, and in 2007 I enrolled in psychology and social work courses through Al-Quds Open University.[14] I had ambitions for myself—I wanted to be a social worker. I didn't have the time to be a full-time student, but I took classes for years and really enjoyed them.

Then, in April of 2008, Israeli officers raided my home. Luckily, none of us were home at the time. But they went through all our things, and they took all of our important documents—our passports, our UNRWA cards that allowed us to receive refugee benefits, my children's birth certificates, even my medical records. We had to send requests to get them back, and eventually they returned some of my medical files and my children's birth certificates. That was it.

GOING INTO THE UNKNOWN

I was arrested on August 1, 2010. Israeli soldiers came to our house at around one a.m. My family was sleeping. The soldiers knocked on the building door, and one of the neighbors let them in. And they came up to our floor and started pounding on the door—there were at least twenty soldiers.

I asked them to wait because I needed to put on my hijab and get dressed.[15] After I opened the door, they told us to gather in the living room, and they took everyone's IDs. My children were around sixteen, seventeen years old at this point. There were many soldiers, and they started searching the house. And then the one in charge came to me and told me, "Kifah, I want to talk to you in person," and he took me into another room.

We sat down, and he told me he was going to start investigating me there. He asked questions about my activities, my affiliation with Change and Reform, connections I might have to Hamas. He was threatening me, saying if I didn't answer him, he would arrest me. He really wanted to know

if I knew anyone associated with Hamas. Then he told me, “I know you’re sick. You have a disease, and that’s why we have a doctor to oversee your situation.” After around thirty minutes, he told me to get ready to go with them. And so they arrested me, and they told me I was going to the station. The soldier in charge said, “We’re going to respect your disease and your age, and we’re going to let you bring your medicine with you,” and they didn’t handcuff me. But I was not allowed to talk to my family before I left. They allowed me to say goodbye very fast, and that’s it.

The officer who led me away told me, “You’re going to be in jail until your daughter gets married.” My daughter, Duha, was around sixteen and a half, and what he meant was, *You’re going to be in jail for a very long time*. Duha told the commander, “Bring my mom back soon because my brother’s a senior in high school, and he needs help preparing for his exams.” The captain told her, “You’re strong enough to take care of your brother.”

I mean, we’re Palestinians. Maybe we’re used to these things. You find that you have patience you didn’t know about. My children were strong, thank God. As a Muslim believer, I just thought, *This is in God’s hands*. I was afraid because I was going to the unknown. I didn’t know what was going to happen, but I had my faith in God.

As the soldiers were driving me to the station in the car, they were very focused on the fact that I was sick. The commander kept saying, “Don’t think that because you’re sick it’s going to stop us from taking you.” They took me to Al-Muskubiya, in Jerusalem.[16] Once there, they strip-searched me. The one who searched me was a female soldier, but it was still a strip search—I was mortified. And then after the search, they took me directly to the doctor. He took a look at my medicine and asked me about my disease. Then they took me to the investigation room. At around six a.m., the interrogation started.

They took general information about me and my family. They asked me again if I knew anyone in Hamas, who they were, how I knew them. I know a lot of people in Al-Bireh because I live here, I’m active in the community, and I stay connected to families that have suffered in the Intifadas. But my connections to people in town are all social, not through some political affiliation. I kept asking them, “Why are you afraid of these social relationships?” They wanted to know about my work with prisoners’

families, and they were trying to get me to confess that I had helped transfer money from Hamas to the families of political prisoners and martyrs. But I hadn't done anything for Hamas, and they didn't have any evidence. They interrogated me for two hours before I was allowed to rest.

They kept investigating me for four days. They had three shifts, so they would change the officer, but the questions would remain the same. They knew that, because of my disease, I am affected by the cold, and they had the air conditioning on the whole time in the cell. It wasn't just uncomfortable, it was very painful. I studied some psychology at university before I left to marry, and I knew that folded arms meant there's something you don't want to say. So I would sit with my arms uncrossed because I didn't have any secrets.

One of the times they interrogated me, an officer tied my hands to the chair and left for around fifteen minutes. When he came back and untied my hands, they had become almost black. My lupus causes a lot of circulatory problems, and I just wasn't getting any blood to my hands. I told the officer, "You know that I'm sick and I have a problem with my hands." So when he went out the next time, he told me he wouldn't tie me up if I promised not to move. I was allowed to sleep during the investigation. At nighttime, they took me to the cell, and I slept there and then went back to the investigation room during the daytime.

I still had this feeling of going into the unknown. I didn't know where they were going with their questions, and they kept threatening me, saying they were going to put me in jail. The interrogating officer kept threatening me with administrative arrest if I didn't confess to connections with Hamas.[17] That was the thing that scared me most because even with no charges, they could put me in prison. At that point, my faith in God kept coming back to me.

WE'D RACE TO WASH THE DISHES

After the four days of investigation, they took me from the station to the prison in HaSharon.[18] When they took me to prison, they didn't tell me it was administrative detention. I never had any charges.

It was very hard to be in prison because it’s a new place with new people you’ve just met. And it was very hard for me, as a mother, to leave my children behind. And another thing was that my disease made it very hard for me, and I suffered a lot. During the four days that they were investigating me, they showed some concern for my disease. They didn’t leave my hands bound, and they let me take my medicine. But after those four days, they didn’t pay any attention to my disease.

In prison, there were seventeen women, and about four women in a room. We had our cots, a few shelves for our clothes, and a couple of chairs. In the winter, we had a space heater.

We were together all the time, and we became friends. There was a woman there who I was friends with before, but we became better friends in prison. The fact that we knew each other before prison was the only thing that was lucky about my time there.

Our day started with the *Fajr* prayer.[19] After that we would stay in our beds and put on our head scarves and veils, and then the officer came in and counted us. After that we would stay in our beds, praying and reciting from the Quran until noon, because there was not much to do. We couldn’t even spend much time cleaning up because it was a really small room. I remember I would keep the small shelf for my clothes unbelievably tidy because there was nothing else to do.

At twelve, we would say the noon prayer. We would pray all together. And after that we would prepare ourselves for the break, when we got to go for a walk outside. The break would be three hours. But it wasn’t something we always looked forward to. Break time was the worst during the summer, because the break was between noon and three p.m., when it was unbelievably hot. In the winter it would be cold and raining, and if we chose to go out, we had to stay out for three hours. So sometimes we’d be soaking wet in the rain or be very hot. We could choose to just stay inside for the whole day. But most of the time, we would go out because it was the only change we’d get. It was the better of two evils.

In my case, I would go out if it was sunny. If not, I wouldn’t take my chances. I would stay in my cell. I asked for gloves so I could protect my hands from the cold, but the guards denied them. For the whole three hours of the break, I would keep walking. The courtyard was only about thirty

feet long, and we kept going back and forth in those thirty feet the whole time. But that was the only activity we got for our legs.

After that we would go back to our cells and start preparing for our main meal, which was lunch. They would bring us food three times a day—breakfast, lunch, and dinner. We had a hot plate that we were allowed in the cell, and we would re-cook the food. We would never keep it the same way they brought it. The food they brought was often potatoes or spaghetti. And it was not completely cooked. We Arabs like our food well done, and we like our spices, so we would spice the food up and make it better.

After we had lunch, we would race to see who was going to do the dishes. Not because we loved doing the dishes so much, but because we wanted to keep busy. After that we would say the *Asr* prayer, and then we would go back to our recitations or watch some TV. The only channels available were Israeli TV channels and PBC because Israel and the Palestinian Authority have to approve what's broadcast.[20] Or we would just sit on the bed and read. In my case, I would keep walking so I could keep my blood circulating, and I would read books from the small library in the prison. I read almost fifty books while I was in prison. Some of the books were religious, but I really enjoyed the ones about social work or psychology.

MY DISEASE CAN BE FATAL, BUT IT DOESN'T KILL FAST

After three months, my daughter came to visit me. She came with my sister, and they were able to visit every couple of weeks. And after six months, my husband was allowed to visit once. But my son wasn't allowed to visit me. My family needed permits to visit me because the prison was in Israel, and my family had to apply to visit. My son wasn't granted a permit, maybe because it was harder for young Palestinian men to get permits to get into Israel. I also had contact with some human rights organizations, such as Addameer, a prisoner rights organization. They tried to get me a doctor, a specialist for my disease, but it was denied by the prison administration.

The main reason for my sickness is that I have a lack of immunity, and it's difficult for me to fight off viruses. And I have a lack of sensation in my extremities. For example, one day when I was first in jail, I was cutting

potatoes—not with a knife because you can't have a knife, but with a can-opener. So I was using that to cut the potato, and I cut off part of my finger without even feeling it.[21] It bled a lot, and I fainted because I was so worried about the situation. And the other women talked to the officers and asked them to take me to the infirmary. That did not go well at all. My finger took almost three months to heal. It became infected with gangrene and turned completely black. It was very, very painful. After that, the other women would not allow me to touch anything, especially that can-opener, or anything wet because I needed to heal.

When I got sick, I would sometimes have to wait two weeks to see a doctor. All the different prescriptions that I gave them, they never filled them and I didn't get any medicine. The thing is, even if I get a flu, it's really hard to recover because of my lack of immunity. So it wasn't necessarily just emergencies, it was the simplest diseases, coughs or colds, that made me suffer. So one time I started screaming in the infirmary, and I told them, "You keep saying you're all about human rights and treating people right, and you're not giving me even minimal medical care."

I also had a problem with my legs. They were very swollen for a month. I couldn't even walk. And they gave me no treatment whatsoever at the beginning. The nurse passed by every day just to check on the prisoners, and one of the prisoners who was our representative with the prison administration kept pushing the nurse and told him, "If anything happens to this inmate, we will blame you." And after almost a month they took me to the doctor. I got medicine for the swelling, but they still wouldn't fill my prescriptions.

My disease can be fatal, but it doesn't kill fast. It takes time. If I don't take medicine, especially for infections, I could die. When I was in prison, my eyes were hurting a lot because I had an infection. It was almost three months before I could see an eye doctor. When I went to him, he didn't take me seriously. He just gave me eye drops that were only meant to moisten the eyes. I left the drops on his desk and told him, "I'm not using those." I was scared, and the other prisoners were really worried all the time because I didn't get the treatment that I needed. I filed complaints with various human rights organizations in Israel. They would respond and do their best. But I was cautious about filing complaints, because the Israeli authorities

could extend my detention as long as they wanted if they thought I was causing problems.

I HAVE ALL THE POWER NOW

I stayed in prison for a year. The authorities renewed my detention three times. They finally released me in Tulkarm in August of 2011, and my family members were waiting for me there.[22]

The hardest meeting was with my son Moad, because he hadn't been allowed to visit me in prison. Seeing him again was very emotional. From the first moment that I entered prison, I had been waiting for that moment, I had been picturing it, all of the time. And now it was not my imagination, it was really happening. When I saw him after my release, he was eighteen, a grown man. It had been very hard for him that year—he'd needed his mother because he had the tawjihi exams.[23] When I got out, he was already finished with the exam, and he had registered for school. So many women came to visit me at the house, but he wanted to stay with me all the time. So when I was sitting with my visitors, he would keep calling for me, "Mom, come see this, come see that," as an excuse to talk to me.

The positive thing is that when I got out of prison, I felt that my children really did mature in that one year. Also, when I wasn't home, Hazem saw the huge role that I play in organizing everything with the kids, the family, and the house. So he appreciates my role way more than he used to! He's always helped out because of my lupus, but he was even more appreciative of what I could do when I got out.

Psychologically speaking, my time in prison still affects me. Now, when I get sick, I always go back to that period of time in my head and remember how it was to be in prison. For example, I'm very careful about having my medications nearby because I was deprived of them when I was in prison. When I'm sick, I go the very next morning to the doctor, and I have the feeling that I've been deprived of the medications for a long time. Now when I go to the doctor and he smiles at me, I really do feel it and appreciate it. I used to take many little things for granted. For example, just

having pins to hold my head scarf in place. In prison, we couldn't have them, so now I appreciate them.

After being released from prison, I didn't change my activities, such as visiting the families of prisoners. I continue because I believe in my work. They can't stop me from having my conviction. And I'm a very social person. They can't change my character, you know.

One thing really opened my eyes. When you're in suffering, it's completely different from being the one outside of the suffering. All the time, I would go to the wives of the prisoners and try to comfort them and tell them to be patient and do this and do that. They would keep saying, "It's hard, it's hard," and I would comfort them.

But what I found out is that it's a million times harder for the prisoner himself than his family, and I tried it firsthand. I used to think that prison would just be somewhere you rest. There's no responsibility, you just sleep, and there's nothing to do. Everyone has all these errands that we have to run, and we have no time. And we're just busy all the time. This is a bliss that we don't appreciate. You have to appreciate every day, even though it's tiresome. And once I was in prison, I really saw it differently. Now, every time I feel I'm in a tough position or it's hard, I just remind myself of my time in prison, and it's more than enough to bring me up again and motivate me. I have all the power now. I can do whatever I want.

Since we completed our interviews with Kifah, her son Moad was imprisoned. He was arrested on June 20, 2014 by the Palestinian Authority. Moad had participated in a demonstration in which he carried a Hamas flag. He was accused of hitting a Palestinian Authority policeman, but he and his family deny this. He was detained for twenty-four days. Meanwhile, Kifah's health has continued to deteriorate. In August, her family was so worried about her that they decided to take her to Jerusalem. The family was successful in Kifah into a hospital there. Doctors ran a number of tests on her to try to find the source of her pain, but at the time of this printing, she is still waiting for results.

[1] For more on the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) and Palestinian refugees, see the Glossary, page 304.

[2] An *abaya* is a long, robe-like garment that covers the entire body except for the face, feet, and hands.

[3] Yazur was a village just east of Tel Aviv and Jaffa that had a population of over 4,000 Arabs prior to 1948. It was destroyed and depopulated in the lead-up to the Arab-Israeli War. For more on the conflict in 1948, see Appendix I, page 295.

[4] Al-Bireh is a city of over 40,000 people just outside Ramallah. Though it doesn't house any refugee camps within city limits, the city has become populated by refugee-status families in recent decades, so that now more than 50 percent of the city's population has refugee status under UNRWA.

[5] Nablus has a population of over 120,000 and is one of the major urban areas of the West Bank. It's located thirty miles north of Ramallah and Al-Bireh.

[6] For more information on the West Bank closures system and checkpoints, see the Glossary, page 304.

[7] Psagot is an Israeli settlement of around 2,000 people located just south of Al-Bireh and just east of Ramallah.

[8] The First Intifada was an uprising throughout the West Bank and Gaza against Israeli military occupation. It began in December 1987 and lasted until 1993. *Intifada* in Arabic means "to shake off." For more information, see Appendix I, page 295.

[9] Lupus is a chronic autoimmune disease that can affect the heart, lungs, kidneys, and joints. Those who suffer from the disease may have symptoms such as fevers, rashes, and fatigue. Kifah has also been diagnosed with Raynaud's syndrome, which is a chronic condition sometimes associated with lupus that causes restriction of blood vessels in the extremities in response to cold or stress. The hands and feet of those with Raynaud's syndrome are often discolored, and the disease can lead to tissue damage and infections such as gangrene. Kifah has been more recently diagnosed with Sjogren's syndrome, another autoimmune disorder, which destroys the salivary and lacrimal glands, causing chronic dry mouth and eyes.

[10] The Oslo Accords took place in 1993 and led to the formation of the Palestinian Authority, an interim government that was designed to administer parts of Palestine until the peace process was finalized. For more information on the Palestinian Authority and the Oslo Accords, see the Glossary, page 304.

[11] Hamas is a political party that was elected to power in Gaza in 2006 and subsequently forced the Palestinian Authority (largely controlled by Hamas's rival party, Fatah) out of Gaza. For more information on Hamas, see the Glossary, page 304.

[12] The Change and Reform List was a political bloc made up of parties that opposed Fatah, including breakaway factions within Fatah itself. Though the Change and Reform bloc was not synonymous with Hamas, Hamas was the majority party within the bloc, which ran under the name Change and Reform Party in the 2006 legislative elections that brought Hamas to power in Gaza.

[13] An exit exam for high school. For more on the tawjihi exams, see the Glossary, page 304.

[14] Al-Quds Open University is a distance-learning public institution with over 60,000 students enrolled. It is not affiliated with Al-Quds University, a university system with three campuses throughout the West Bank.

[15] The *hijab* is a garment that covers the head and neck and is worn by many Muslim women throughout the world.

[16] Al-Muskubiya ("the Russian Compound") is a large compound in Jerusalem that was built in the nineteenth century to house an influx of Russian Orthodox pilgrims into the city during the time of Ottoman rule. It now houses a major interrogation center and lockup, as well as courthouses and other Israeli government buildings.

[17] For more on administrative detention, which is detention without formal charges, see Glossary, page 304.

[18] HaSharon Prison is in Kfar Saba, a suburb of Tel Aviv/Jaffa. It is one of the larger prison complexes in Israel and houses Israeli and Palestinian prisoners in separate wards. There are few female Palestinians in the prison, however—perhaps a dozen at any given time.

[19] *Fajr*, which means "dawn" in Arabic, is the first of five daily prayers said by practicing Muslims.

[20] The Palestinian Broadcasting Corporation (PBC) was established in 1994 after the formation of the Palestinian Authority.

[21] Several of Kifah's fingers are damaged or partially missing from cold or infections. When she told this story, she held up one of the damaged fingers to show why she couldn't feel the pain from the cut.

[22] Tulkarm is a city of over 60,000 people on the northwest border of the West Bank, about sixty miles north of Al-Bireh.

[23] An exit exam for high school. For more on the tawjihi exams, see the Glossary, page 304.

NADER AL-MASRI RUNNING IN GAZA CITY

NADER AL-MASRI

Semi-professional runner, 34
Born in Beit Hanoun, Gaza
Interviewed in Gaza City, Gaza

Nader Al-Masri is the only Palestinian man we interview who doesn't smoke—the absence of a cigarette in his hand is striking to us. Dressed in a faded plaid shirt, he sips a fruit cocktail as he answers our questions. Everything about Nader is neat and trim, from his chiseled face to his clipped answers during the interview. His stern, focused manner perhaps comes from the force of will it takes for him to pursue running in Gaza, a place where it's difficult to earn recognition for following a dream, much less get paid for it. With an unemployment rate approaching 40 percent, most Gazans are focused on getting by, but Nader has scraped together a way to support his family of seven while keeping up a demanding training schedule and traveling to competitions.

We first interview Nader during our trip to Gaza in the spring of 2013. He explains to us why, despite the lack of support, Gaza's legendarily hot summers, difficulties traveling, and even Israeli air strikes, he has kept running.

I WAS ALWAYS FASTER THAN THE OTHER BOYS

I grew up in Gaza, in Beit Hanoun.[1] I was always faster than the other boys. In Gaza when I was a child, the only sport kids played seriously was soccer. So when I was very young, running meant running back and forth

while chasing a ball. Really, though, I didn't care about the ball—I just enjoyed running. One day when I was fourteen, my teacher Saoud Hamed —he taught Arabic and sports—announced that we'd be having a foot race. That wasn't something we'd ever done before in school. I prepared for it by running whenever I could for a few days, and then I won the race easily. My teacher told me I had a special talent, and offered to help me train.

From that first race, I wanted to be a runner, to be the fastest there is, but my family didn't support me. My dad thought there were better things for me to do, such as help out with his business as a grocer. So I had to train secretly while I was a teenager. Then one day, I was away from home for a long time, running, and when I came back, my father asked me what I had been doing. I said, "I was training to run, and running is the thing I want to do with my life. That's all there is to it." Later, my uncle visited our house and was able to convince my dad to let me train.

Training for me took a lot of extra effort. There weren't any great places to run in Beit Hanoun or Gaza City. I didn't have good shoes. And I had to work long hours at my family's produce market a lot of the time. It was routine for me to leave the house with my father at two in the morning for work. I'd go to markets in Gaza City to pick up shipments of produce, and he'd go into Israel through Erez to buy produce there.[2] Then my brothers and I would be in charge of the market, which was right next to our home, until my father returned from Israel. So there were many days when I didn't have a chance to start running until the afternoon, when it could be hot, and when I was already tired from a long day.

During this whole time, my teacher Saoud was very supportive of me. He helped me train, and he also worked to get the attention of the Palestinian national running team, which was based in the West Bank. I got stronger and stronger as a runner, and then I joined the national team in 1999, at nineteen years old. I remember telling my family that I was on the national team and that I was going to travel to Ireland for a race. They didn't believe me. They asked me, "What are you talking about?" They went and asked Saoud, and he said, "Yeah, your son made the team and we're leaving in a few days." My family was shocked that this was something I could actually do with my life.

So in 1999 I left Gaza for the first time through the Rafah border into Egypt. Saoud was with me. I remember him saying, “You are about to have an amazing experience, Nader.” We flew to Ireland out of Cairo. When I got on a plane for the first time, I was a bit worried, but I was calm as soon as the plane took off.

In Ireland, I saw a very different life than the one I knew in Gaza. People there had so much, there were times I felt like what we had back in Gaza couldn’t even be called “life.” But one of my best memories from Ireland was just meeting the other runners on the Palestine national team, getting a chance to talk about shared experiences. I’d never met them before, since I’d never had the chance to travel to the West Bank, and there weren’t any other members of the team from Gaza. The coach of the national team was Majed Abu Maraheel. He was the first runner to represent Palestine internationally when he ran in the Atlanta Olympics in 1996. The national team had just been formed the year before in 1995, just after the Palestinian Authority first came into power. It was great to feel like there were others like me, other Palestinians who had devoted themselves to running.

After I finished the championship, I insisted on going back to Gaza and training there, so that I could represent Palestine again and again in other countries. I didn’t want to be a Palestinian runner living somewhere other than my home, and I wanted to stay in Gaza, where people were just starting to notice me and realize that running has a purpose.

I’VE ONLY BEEN TO THE WEST BANK ONCE

In international competitions, I’m a runner, and I throw shot put. As a runner, I participate in the 5,000-meter race. My proudest moment as a runner so far was at the Asian Games in Doha, Qatar, in 2006, when I got eighth place in the 5,000-meter race. All together, I’ve been in forty international competitions, including the Beijing Olympics in 2008. I was just under the qualifying time to run in Beijing, but I still got a chance to represent my country on the national stage.

In the past thirteen years since I joined the national team, I’ve been to twenty-five countries, but I’ve only been to the West Bank once. That was

in 2008, when I had to cross to Jordan. It wasn't easy. It took seven months for me to get the permit to travel through Jordan. It was because of the media, because I got many interviews with Israeli TV channels and newspapers. At the end of the day, the Israeli government gave me the permit.

I also ran the UNRWA Marathon in 2011 and 2012, and I received first place both times. Then in 2013, it was canceled.[3] In 2013 and 2014, Gazan runners were also banned from going to Bethlehem to participate in the new marathon there.[4] Israel would not grant us a permit to go. In 2013, I applied four times. They didn't give reasons. The Bethlehem Marathon meant a lot to me, because I wanted to run in Palestine against other top Palestinian runners.

I've never been to Bethlehem or Jerusalem. It would have been my first time. Even if I get a permit to the West Bank, I won't get a permit to Jerusalem this year because of my age. The Israelis only give permits to men older than thirty-five to travel to Jerusalem, because they see young men from Gaza as too dangerous to even consider allowing in the city.

IT GIVES ME THE SENSE OF BEING FREE

I'm married with five kids—four girls and one boy. I was married to my wife Sawsan in 2007, and I supported my family for a time as a security officer with the Palestinian Authority. But after Hamas took over shortly after I got married, they drove the PA out of Gaza and I was left without any job. Still, I continue to be paid by the PA, which is true of many Gazans who had worked for the Palestinian Authority. I'm paid around $500 per month.[5] That helps to feed my family, and I also need the money for vitamins and supplements, when I can afford them.

I train alone because no one can compete with me. There is no sense in competing with people slower than me. I have to compete with people who are like me, and that doesn't exist in Gaza yet. I usually train at a playground near my house. It's 400 meters, like a normal track, but it's a sand track, so the sand slows me down. It takes more time. It also hurts my legs, so I don't train there all the time. Sometimes I train on the beach,

sometimes on the sidewalk. I wake up at six a.m. and train for two hours in the morning, and then I go back home, have lunch, and take a nap. Then I train again at six p.m. I have a program. I train all summer, even when it gets extremely hot.[6] It's harder, but I never stop, because when I stop I feel like my legs need to move. I run even during Ramadan, after I break the fast. I usually start at six a.m., but during Ramadan I start training after we eat at seven or eight p.m.[7]

I regularly go to Europe and other countries to participate in competitions. If you visit my home, you can see the many medals and prizes I've received over the past thirteen years. Sometimes, host organizations that invite me to races pay for my travel. But I still have to figure out how to get to Cairo, which can be impossible when the borders are closed.

Soccer players are sponsored and supported by the government and the Palestinian Authority more than runners. I feel isolated because I am not supported and I don't have facilities. Sometimes I stay for six months or so outside Gaza to train, since I don't have the facilities to help improve my running here. I have the proper shoes, but I can't run with them in Gaza. They have spikes, and I can't run with them on the sand, so I only use them when I travel. But then when I wear them, they give me problems because I'm not used to them. I can run 5,000 meters in fourteen minutes, but the international qualifying standard for a number of top-level competitions is just over thirteen minutes. So I'm training so I can participate in international competitions and make money. I can't make money until I reach this goal. But becoming better with the facilities I have available here in Gaza is difficult.

My running doesn't make money. I've thought about leaving Gaza to have more support as a runner. I have a wife and kids who I would have to leave behind, but I would be paid, so they would have a better life and I would be achieving my dream.

I go running while people are sleeping, and I do all these things partly because I want to get first place when I run and show that Palestinians have something to be proud of. I'm proud to be representing Palestine, no matter how hard it is for me to keep training. When I go to represent Palestine in championships, I try to focus on the idea that Palestinians are a peaceful

people. And I draw attention to the fact that we can't move around easily because we don't have an airport and we have to go through Egypt to travel, and not even that is reliable. Now the Rafah crossing into Egypt is closed.

Unfortunately, not many Gazans know about what I've done as a runner. Usually, when you say you are on the official team of your country, it means something, but here there isn't much appreciation of that sort of achievement. There was a movie I saw about a runner who died, and as the ambulance pulled away, people were clapping like he was something great. But in Gaza, if I died while I was in the middle of a training run, probably nobody on the street would notice.

I've thought of quitting many times because of the lack of support, but running is still the thing I want to do at the end of the day. It takes all of my time, but it's what I want to.

I also keep running because it basically means freedom to me. It's not like soccer, where I have to play with eleven others. I run on my own. I go wherever I want, do whatever I want, and it gives me the sense of being free. The second I start running, I feel free to fly and go wherever I want. When I was young, before I had a family, I'd even run when there was an Israeli invasion or bombing in Gaza City. Today, I stay with my family when anything like that happens. But whenever I feel stressed out by everything that's happening here, I can still leave the city and go running in the country, where there's nobody else in sight, and it gives me the feeling of being free.

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[1] Beit Hanoun is a city northeast of Gaza City with over 30,000 residents. The city is on the northeast border of Gaza and close to the Erez crossing into Israel.

[2] The Erez crossing is the major border crossings between Israel and the Gaza Strip. Movement across the border was severely restricted starting in 2007.

[3] The UNRWA Marathon is an annual marathon that was started in 2011 and brings people from around the world to Gaza. In 2013, it was canceled because Hamas didn't allow women to participate.

[4] The 2013 Bethlehem Marathon was the first marathon ever organized in the West Bank. The Israeli government denied passage of twenty-six Gazan applicants into the West Bank to participate in the race on the grounds that the applications didn't meet criteria for extreme humanitarian need, such as

medical urgency, which are currently the only criteria for permitting Gazans to travel into the West Bank.

[5] The Palestinian Authority governed Gaza from 1995 until 2007, when the political party Hamas took full control of Gazan governance. Though employees of the Palestinian Authority in Gaza were replaced by Hamas loyalists, the Palestinian Authority continued to pay former government employees in hopes of an eventual return to power in Gaza.

[6] Average temperatures in Gaza City in July and August are over 90 degrees Fahrenheit.

[7] For the month of Ramadan, observant Muslims refrain from eating between sunrise and sundown.

APPENDICES

I. TIMELINE OF MODERN PALESTINE

The history of the lands west of the Jordan River is vast, complex, and contentious. We've composed the following timeline as a guide to help readers understand the broader context of some of the stories presented in this book, and to understand the ways the very name "Palestine" has developed across millennia. We've assembled the timeline with information from the Palestine Institute, as well as information from timelines assembled by UNRWA and other UN agencies, the Guardian*, PBS, BBC, and others. For further reading, we recommend Ilan Pappé's* A History of Modern Palestine *and Edward Said's* The Question of Palestine.

8000 BCE—The first permanent human settlements appear in the land west of the Jordan River. These settlements develop into the city of Jericho, which is still inhabited and located in what is today the West Bank.

8000 BCE–1000 BCE—Control of the land between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River (known in the ancient world as Canaan) passes through control of numerous empires, including Egypt and Babylon. Parts of the region are controlled by autonomous Canaanite city-states. Around 1200 BCE, a coastal Canaanite people known as the Philistines form a defensive alliance around the cities of Gaza, Ashdod, and Ashkelon near the Mediterranean coast. Egyptians describe the land of the Philistines as "Peleset." Later, Greek writers refer to the entire area between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River as "Palestine," or "land of the Philistines."

1000 BCE–850 BCE—The Kingdoms of Israel and Judea emerge from confederations of autonomous tribes of the people known as the Israelites. The Kingdom of Israel has its capital in Samaria (near modern Nablus), and the Kingdom of Judea makes Jerusalem its capital.

722 BCE–1 BCE—Part or all of the land now known as Palestine is ruled by the Assyrians, the Babylonians, numerous Hellenistic dynasties, and the Romans, among others. Semi-autonomous city-states also flourish during this time, including those of Israelite and other Canaanite peoples.

324–634—Roman Emperor Constantine moves his capital from Rome to the city of Byzantium (renamed Constantinople). He establishes Christianity as the religion of the new Byzantine Empire, which includes all of Palestine. Palestine passes through Byzantine rule to Persian rule, then back to Byzantine rule. During this time period, much of the population of the region is Christian.

610–632—The religion of Islam is established in the Arabian Peninsula under the leadership of Prophet Muhammad. By the time of his death in 632, Prophet Muhammad has established Islam as the accepted belief of many Arabic-speaking peoples in the region.

634—Two years after the death of Prophet Muhammad, Islamic Arabs defeat the armies of the Byzantine and Persian empires and take control of Palestine. In subsequent years, Arabic-speaking peoples move into Syria, west into Egypt and Africa, and east into Mesopotamia.

634–1516—During the Middle Ages, Palestine is ruled by a number of dynasties and Sultanates. Power struggles open the way for Crusaders, or Christian armies from Europe, to invade parts of Palestine. In 1187, a Muslim leader from Kurdistan named Salah Ad-Din conquers the first Crusader kingdom in Jerusalem. During the next century, Palestine is controlled by numerous rulers—

including Crusaders—until an Egyptian military aristocracy known as the Mamluks takes control in 1250. Two centuries of relative peace follow. In 1453, Constantinople falls to the Ottomans, a Turkic people from central Asia. After renaming the city Istanbul, the Ottoman Empire begins expanding. By 1516, the Ottomans have conquered Palestine, Syria, Egypt, and Western Arabia.

1516–1918—Palestine is ruled by the Ottomans for over four hundred years.

1800—By this year, there are as many as 250,000 people living in Palestine. Though the majority population is Muslim, there may be as many as 7,000 Jews living in the region and 20,000 Christians.

1850s—The roots of the modern Zionist movement first appear in Europe and Russia in the context of growing anti-Jewish sentiment and secular nationalism. In the following decades, 1.5 million Jews emigrate from Europe and Russia—many move to the United States, but some begin purchasing land in Palestine.

1900—Jewish leaders in Europe sympathetic to the Zionist movement fund expanded land purchases in Palestine from the Ottoman Empire. Jewish colonies are established. By 1900, the population of Palestine is between 500,000 and 600,000, with as many as 50,000 Jews and 60,000 Christians living approximately 400,000 Muslims.

1914—World War I begins. The Ottoman Empire joins Germany and the Central Powers against Britain, France, and Russia.

1915—Britain's high commissioner in Egypt writes letters to Arab leader Sharif Hussein bin Ali and promises British support for Arab independence if Hussein revolts against the Ottomans. Hussein plans for a unified Arab state that stretches from Palestine and Syria to Yemen.

1917—Britain issues the Balfour Declaration, promising support for a Jewish national home in Palestine.

1918—World War I ends. The British army defeats the Ottoman army in Syria, and British forces occupy Palestine, Transjordan, and most of Iraq while French forces occupy Syria, Lebanon, and parts of Turkey and Iraq.

1921—Palestinians protest the loss of land through frequent demonstrations. Serious conflict between Jewish and non-Jewish Arab communities over land rights erupts in May. Dozens are killed near the neighboring cities of Tel Aviv and Jaffa.

1922—Through the League of Nations, Britain receives a mandate to administer Palestine. Transjordan is established as a semi-autonomous kingdom called Jordan, while Britain and the League of Nations agree to work toward a Palestine divided between a Jewish nation and an Arab one. The British Mandate is formally implemented in 1923. Arab protests over land loss continue through the decade.

1924—European and American philanthropists establish the Palestinian Jewish Colonization Association, an organization that helps fund the construction and maintenance of new Jewish colonies in the region.

1929—Increasing tensions between the British, Arabs, and Jews leads to violence. In August, sixty-seven Jews are killed by Arabs in the city of Hebron. Zionist settlers develop the Haganah, a paramilitary group established to protect Jewish interests.

1931—A paramilitary group called the Irgun splits off from the Haganah and begins to organize military strikes against the British and Arabs.

1936–1939—In the years before World War II, thousands of European Jews immigrate to Palestine, despite restrictions imposed by the British. Many Arabs angered by British authority, Jewish immigration, and loss of land rights adopt a general strike and call for acts of civil disobedience, including a boycott of British institutions. British authorities respond to these acts of rebellion with mass arrests, housing demolitions, school closures, and other methods. In 1937, the first partition plan for Israel and Palestine is created by the British Peel Commission.

1939—World War II begins. Britain bans land sales to Jews in Palestine in an effort to obtain Arab support against Germany.

1946—The Irgun orchestrates the bombing of the King David Hotel, then the British mandate headquarters.

1947—The General Assembly of the newly formed United Nations recommends partitioning Palestine into a Jewish state and an Arab one. Under the proposal, Jerusalem will be shared by the two states under a United Nations peacekeeping force. The vote represents international community approval of the Zionist aspiration to an independent state and lays the groundwork for the state's establishment. However, many Christian and Muslim residents of Palestine resist the planned partition. Many believe that the land granted to the Jewish State doesn't reflect the demographic distribution of Palestine. At this time, the population of Palestine is approximately one-third Jewish.

—Beginning soon after the UN vote, paramilitary groups such as the Irgun begin expelling Palestinians from their homes and demolishing their villages. The forced migration of Palestinians that begins in 1947 during the emergent civil war comes to be known as the *Nakba*, or "catastrophe." Over the next two years, 750,000 Palestinians are displaced from their homes and pushed toward the coastal land around Gaza City, Egypt, the lands east and west of the Jordan River, Syria, and Lebanon.

1948—Forced migration of Arabs continues. On May 14, David Ben-Gurion declares statehood for Israel, with borders largely following the UN plan, and becomes its first prime minister. The next day, U.S. President Harry Truman instructs a member of the American delegation to the UN to recognize Israeli statehood. The same day, military units from Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia declare war on the new state of Israel.

—May–June: Coordinated Arab forces battle the Israeli military until both sides accept a truce proposed by UN peacekeeping forces. The truce does not last.

—July: After further battles with Syria and Egypt, Israel expands the territory under its control to include parts of western Galilee, the Negev desert, and access to the Red Sea.

—December: After capturing part of the West Bank of the Jordan River, King Abdullah I declares the union of Arab Palestine and Jordan.

1949—The UN mediates armistice agreements between Israel and Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria, ending the conflict. The armistice establishes new boundaries between Israel and bordering nations, though no formal border. The UN boundaries come to be known as the "Green Line" and are used as a point of departure when Israel and Palestinian representatives discuss borders in future peace negotiations. Around the time of the armistice, 750,000 non-Jews have been displaced from the

land declared to be Israel while as many as 150,000 remain. Many Arabs that remain receive citizenship but are governed by military law until 1966 and many experience continued violence and repression.

—The peace agreement creates the Gaza Strip and the West Bank as distinct political regions. The Gaza Strip comes under Egyptian control. Jordan gains control of part of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Jewish immigration to Israel increases, bringing Israel's population to one million people by the end of 1949.

1950—Israel passes its Law of Return, allowing any Jewish person (with a few restrictions) to live in Israel and receive Israeli citizenship. From 1949 to 1952, Israel's Jewish population more than doubles.

—The United Nations formally launches the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which sets up refugee camps and provides aid for 750,000 Palestinian refugees living in the West Bank, Gaza, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon.

1964—January: Arab League leaders meet in Cairo and decide to sponsor the creation of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), an organization with transnational aims of representing Palestinians and "the liberation of" Palestine.

1965—Syria begins discreetly supporting Fatah, a small organization founded in 1959 by Palestinian refugees living abroad. Fatah seeks military action against Israel and begins raids on Israeli targets in mid-1965. The organization carries out more than three dozen attacks by the end of the year.

1967—Israeli military forces clash with Fatah and Syrian armies. With regional tensions mounting, Egypt sends troops near its border with Israel in May. In response, Israel mobilizes troops to the Sinai border and calls up its reserve soldiers.

—June 5: Israel launches an air strike on Egypt's airfields in the Sinai, destroying nearly all of the Egyptian air force and beginning what will become known as the Six-Day War.

—June 7: Israel secures East Jerusalem and moves further into the West Bank as fighting continues.

—June 8: Egypt accepts a UN cease-fire.

—June 9: Syria accepts a UN cease-fire, but Israel begins an assault on the Golan Heights.

—June 10: Israel occupies Qunaitra, a key position in the Syrian Golan Heights. The Six-Day War ends. At the war's end, Israeli military and administrative control begins throughout Jerusalem, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, the Golan Heights, and the Sinai Peninsula.

—More than 100,000 new Palestinian refugees leave the newly occupied territories for Jordan. Soon after, Arab heads of state attempt to find diplomatic solutions to regain the territory Israel occupied in the war. Fatah continues attacks in the West Bank as well as in land within Israel's pre-1967 borders, and new factions organized around Palestinian liberation emerge. Still, the aims for many Palestinian activists shift from cultivating pan-Arab unity to a narrower Palestinian sense of nationalism.

—Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza are issued ID cards by Israeli military authorities. Palestinians living outside Gaza or West Bank at the time IDs are issued lose permission to reside in the occupied territories.

—The first Israeli settlement is established in the West Bank at Kfar Etzion.

1969—Yasser Arafat, a Fatah leader, is elected head of the PLO.

1970—By this year, there are more Palestinians living in the unified territories of the West Bank and Jordan than Jordanians. The PLO attempts to assert political power in Jordan. The tension between the PLO and Jordanian authorities leads to a civil war known as Black September and the PLO's expulsion from Jordan. The PLO then makes its base in Lebanon.

1973—The Israeli government builds settlements in the West Bank, the Golan Heights, and northern Sinai, suggesting an eventual turn from temporary military occupation to a permanent Israeli civilian presence. On the Jewish holiday of Yom Kippur, Egyptian and Syrian forces attack Israeli forces in the Golan Heights and the Sinai Peninsula. On October 22, a cease-fire agreement officially ends attacks on both sides, but some attacks continue as Egypt attempts to gain territory in the Sinai. In postwar negotiations brokered by the U.S. early the next year, Syria regains much of the Golan Heights, and Egypt and Israel agree to new borders on either side of the Suez Canal. Israel continues to occupy a portion of the Golan Heights despite international legal restrictions on the occupation.

1974—November: Arafat speaks before the United Nations and asks for international recognition of Palestine as the home of an independent people. In response, the UN grants the PLO "observer status." The designation allows limited participation in the UN General Assembly by certain non-state organizations.

1975—Civil war begins in Lebanon. The PLO is a major force in the war as it seeks to protect Palestinian refugees and assert its control over the country's south. The war continues for fifteen years.

1978—September: U.S. President Jimmy Carter meets in secret with Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and Egyptian President Anwar Al-Sadat at Camp David, resulting in the Camp David Accords. These agreements set the principles for an Egypt–Israeli peace treaty that ends three decades of hostilities between the two countries. Israeli soldiers are removed from the Sinai Peninsula, and the region is reclaimed by Egypt.

1980—Israel passes a law declaring the city of Jerusalem "complete and united, is the capital of Israel."

1981—Israel votes to annex the Golan Heights, which it had captured from Syria in the Six-Day War.

1982—June: Israel invades Lebanon, where the PLO is based. Defense minister Ariel Sharon's raids exceed the limits of the state-approved defense plan, taking Israeli forces into the capital Beirut and incurring thousands of civilian casualties, especially in the Palestinian and Shiite neighborhoods of Sabra and Shatilla. By the end of the summer, a multinational peacekeeping force arrives to protect Palestinian civilians and oversee the departure of the PLO. The PLO is expelled from Lebanon and settles in Tunisia. Israeli forces remain in south Lebanon through 2000.

1987—December: An Israeli tank-support truck crashes into civilian cars in Gaza, killing four Palestinians. Shortly after, Palestinian frustrations erupt into demonstrations in Gaza and the West Bank. Known as the *Intifada* or "casting off," this uprising begins without direction from the PLO or any other external organization, though the PLO soon becomes heavily involved. By January 1988, Intifada leaders adopt proposals calling for the creation of a PLO-led Palestinian state that would

coexist with Israel. Over the next few years, the center of Palestinian politics shifts from exiled Palestinian populations in neighboring Arab states to the occupied territories.

—Israel responds to the uprising with violence targeting demonstrators and Arab prisoners, and begins large-scale arrests of protesters; during this period its per capita prison population climbs to the highest in the world. In the first five weeks of the Intifada, almost 200,000 Palestinians are imprisoned, more than 250,000 are wounded, and 33 are killed; Israel's response receives criticism from the international community and creates solidarity across Palestinian factions.

—As Intifada violence escalates, Palestinian members of the Muslim Brotherhood movement form Hamas, an armed group calling for a theocratic Palestinian state. With PLO corruption scandals on the rise, the appeal of Hamas and other Islamic groups grows.

1988—Palestinian leaders release the Palestinian Declaration of Independence on November 15.

1991—October–December: Leaders from Israel and Arab representatives from Lebanon, Syria, and a combined Jordan-Palestine delegation convene in Madrid for peace and land negotiations, at a conference sponsored by the U.S. and the USSR. The conference is the first attempt at direct peace talks between delegates from Israel, the Arab states, and the Palestinians.

1992—October: Jordan and Israel announce that they have drafted a peace treaty, to be ratified if a larger, comprehensive regional peace treaty is established.

1993—After months of talks in secret, Israel and the PLO sign the Oslo Peace Accords. For the first time, the PLO formally recognizes Israel's existence as a state, and Israel formally recognizes the Palestinian people and the PLO. The agreement establishes the Palestinian Authority, which will govern Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank on an interim basis. Israel also promises to freeze settlement construction in the occupied territories. While there is some disagreement among historians about where to mark the end of the First Intifada, most place it at either the Oslo Accords or the 1991 Madrid conference.

1995—September: Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat sign another peace accord, known as Oslo II, that solidifies some of the principles set out in the 1993 Oslo Accords. Oslo II sets deadlines for Palestinian elections, negotiations on permanent status, and land concessions from Israel.

—November: Amid unrest from the ultra-Orthodox and extremist Israeli settlers in reaction to Oslo II's proposed land concessions, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin is assassinated by Israeli citizen Yigal Amir. The assassination and its fallout disrupt the peace process severely.

1996—Israel's next elected prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, lifts a four-year freeze on settlement expansion in the territories without consulting Yasser Arafat. Settlements expand rapidly. Over the next decade, the population of settlers in the West Bank alone doubles from roughly 125,000 to 250,000.

1999—May: The deadline passes for the end of negotiations on Palestine's permanent status, as set by the Oslo agreements.

2000—July: U.S. President Bill Clinton hosts Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat for negotiations at Camp David, though no agreement is reached.

—September: Ariel Sharon, an Israeli opposition leader and former military commander, visits an East Jerusalem site holy to both Judaism and Islam known as the Temple Mount, or the Al-Aqsa Mosque. While visiting, Sharon publicly declares that the holy site will remain forever under Israeli control.

—The Second Intifada begins, guided by popular disappointment with the Oslo Accords. Palestinian protests begin in Jerusalem and spread throughout the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Compared to the First Intifada, the Second Intifada is marked by increased violence: greater incidence of shootings, suicide bombings by Arab militias, and targeted assassinations of Palestinian political leaders by the Israeli Defense Forces.

2002—Israeli military forces invade and occupy parts of the West Bank in Operation Defensive Shield, their largest ground assault into Palestinian territory since 1967. Israel begins construction of a barrier separating the West Bank and Israel, which divides communities, blocks travel routes, and remakes the geography of the West Bank. Nearly 85 percent of the proposed barrier between Israel and the West Bank cuts through territory delineated as Palestinian by the 1949 Armistice "Green Line."

2004—April: Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon announces a unilateral "Disengagement Plan," calling for the removal of all Jewish settlers from the Gaza Strip and parts of the West Bank. Intifada violence dwindles. Plans accelerate for a barrier wall that will seal off most of the West Bank and Gaza from Israel. Yasser Arafat falls ill and dies in November.

2005—After the death of Yasser Arafat, Mahmoud Abbas is elected president of the Palestinian Authority. Abbas works with international organizations for transparency and the de-militarization of resistance groups.

—August: Israel's Unilateral Disengagement Plan of Gaza begins, and thousands of settlers in the region are relocated by the following September. While the Palestinian Authority governs within Gaza, Israel stays in control of Gaza's borders.

2006—January: Hamas wins a surprise majority in elections for the Palestinian Authority's legislature. In response, international donors including the U.S. and the European Union suspend aid to Gaza. Israel also begins withholding the taxes it collects for the Palestinian Authority.

—Soon after the election, Hamas and rival Fatah clash. In June, Hamas captures Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit from a Gaza border post. His safe return becomes a focus for Israel's politicians and citizens.

2007—July: Hamas drives Fatah out of Gaza following a spate of armed confrontations. Hamas effectively severs its relationship with the Palestinian Authority.

—Following Hamas's takeover of Gaza, Israel imposes a comprehensive blockade on the Gaza Strip. With support from Egypt, Israel restricts the movement of people, goods, electricity, fuel, and water into and out of Gaza. By mid-2008, imports to Gaza are reduced to 30 percent of their pre-blockade levels.

2008–2009—Israel launches Operation Cast Lead, a campaign into Gaza with the stated aim of destroying Hamas's rocket capabilities. Casualties are widespread, including the deaths of 1,200 to 1,400 Gazans. Israel also damages much of Gaza's internal economic infrastructure, leaving it reliant on outside aid that has been restricted by the blockade.

2009—October: Israel releases twenty female prisoners in exchange for a video proving that Gilad Shalit is still alive.

2010—April: Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas signs a decree promoting a boycott of products made in the Israeli settlements. The decree stipulates punishments for Palestinians who sell settlement goods.

—June: Israel eases import restrictions of the Gaza blockade after a failed raid on a flotilla of six ships bringing aid to Gaza. During Israel's raid nine Turkish activists on the ships are killed and dozens injured, causing an international outcry.

2011—After five years, Hamas releases Gilad Shalit, in exchange for the release of more than 1,000 Palestinian prisoners held by Israel. Rocket attacks and armed conflict between Israel and Hamas continue, as does the Gaza blockade.

2012—November: The UN General Assembly overwhelmingly approves Palestine as a non-member observer state, the same status held by the Vatican. The same year, Israel launches Operation Pillar of Defense, an eight day assault that leaves as many as 167 Gazans dead. Six Israelis, including four civilians, are killed by rockets fired from Gaza.

2013—U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry announces renewed Israel–Palestine peace talks. Plans to construct housing for settlers in areas of the West Bank and East Jerusalem under Israeli control increase.

2014—In response to increased settlement construction, the Palestinian Authority unilaterally applies for membership in fifteen international organizations and treaties. Peace talks initiated by John Kerry are called off.

—April: Political parties Hamas and Fatah announce a reconciliation and begin to negotiate a reunion between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority. The reconciliation plan includes new elections scheduled for the end of 2014.

—June: Three Israeli teens are kidnapped near Hebron. Though Israeli officials have strong evidence that the teens have been killed shortly after the kidnapping, raids and mass arrests are undertaken throughout the West Bank. Israeli re-arrests dozens of Palestinians previously released as part of the Gilad Shalit prisoner swap. Weeks later, a Palestinian teen in East Jerusalem is kidnapped and murdered by Israeli settlers.

—July: Hamas begins firing rockets into Israel, claiming that the attacks are driven by the re-arrest of prisoners from the Gilad Shalit prisoner swap, as well as the continued siege of Gaza. The Israeli military launches what it calls Operation Protective Edge in the Gaza Strip. After a week of bombings, Israel sends a ground force into Gaza. In the first month of Operation Protective Edge, over 1,800 Gazans are killed, the majority civilians.

—August: Israeli strikes in Gaza continue. A unified Palestinian delegation negotiates a cease-fire with Israel through Egypt. Rockets from Gaza also continue. Through the end of August, over 2,100 Palestinians have been killed, while four Israeli civilians and over sixty Israeli soldiers have also been killed.

II. GLOSSARY

administrative detention: A legal procedure under which detainees are held without charges or trial. Some forms of administrative detention are legal under international law during times of war and while peace agreements are negotiated between opposing factions. Many of the detainees in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, are held by the United States in administrative detention indefinitely, and the procedure has also been employed in Northern Ireland against the Irish Republican Army and in South Africa during the apartheid era. Administrative detention was employed by the British against Jewish insurgents during the British Mandate of Palestine, and the Israeli military adopted the practice at the formation of Israel. In 2014, Israel has held as many as 300 Palestinians in administrative detention. Though each term of detention is limited to a set number of days (usually a single day to as many as six months), detention can be renewed in court, meaning detainees can be held indefinitely without trial or charges. Though article 78 of the Fourth Geneva Convention grants occupying powers the right to detain persons in occupied territories for security reasons, it stipulates that this procedure should only be used for "imperative security reasons" and not as punishment. During the Second Intifada, Israel arrested tens of thousands of males between the ages of fourteen and forty-five without charges.

Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades: The informal military wing of the Fatah party. Though some members of Fatah disavow the brigades, they have been actively associated with the party since the Second Intifada. The brigades are considered a terrorist organization by Israel, the United States, Europe, and others.

Al-Quds Brigades: The military wing of the Islamic Jihad in Palestine movement. The Al-Quds Brigades were especially active around the city of Jenin during the Second Intifada, but the strength of the organization has been diminished since the end of the Intifada.

Arab: A designation that is defined by broad cultural and linguistic ties rather than by ethnic, geographic, or religious affiliations. Most Arabs speak some version of Arabic, of which there are numerous dialects. Approximately 80 to 90 percent of Arabs identify themselves as Muslim. Most of the rest are Christian. There is some disagreement over whether or not Jews living in Palestine before the Zionist movement were considered Arab or not, even those who spoke Arabic.

Arab-Israeli War: A conflict between newly formed Israel and neighboring Arab nations that has shaped Israeli–Palestinian relations since 1948. Tensions between Jewish and Arabic residents of the British Mandate in Palestine (1923–1948) were high leading up to the 1947 United Nations announcement of partition of the region into a Jewish nation (Israel) and a state for the region's non-Jewish Arab population (Palestine). The Arab League, an organization of neighboring Arab countries, opposed the partition plan, and declared war on Israel in May of 1948, immediately after Israel officially declared statehood. The war between the Arab States and Israel lasted until armistice agreements in the spring of 1949. During the war, more than 750,000 Palestinians were displaced from their homes, and Israel annexed 60 percent of the land that had been demarcated as Palestinian territory under the 1947 U.N. partition plan. Palestinians refer to the war and its aftermath as the *Nakba*, or "catastrophe," and much of Palestinian politics today is driven by the claimed right of families to return to lands they were expelled from in 1948.

Arab League: An organization of Arab countries that was formed in 1945. It originally included Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and Syria. The Arab League has grown to include twenty-two countries and is chartered to promote Arab economic and political interests. During the Arab-Israeli War in 1948, the Arab League countries launched a joint attack on newly formed Israel in response to the displacement of Arabs within Israel's newly declared borders.

Areas A, B, and C: Administrative areas within the West Bank that were established following the 1993 Oslo Accords. In Area A, the Palestinian Authority maintains full civil and security control. This area makes up only 18 percent of the West Bank but includes dense urban areas—the cities of Bethlehem, Hebron (approximately 80 percent of the city), Jenin, Jericho, Nablus, Qalqilya, Ramallah, and Tulkarm. Israeli citizens are forbidden to enter territory designated Area A; however, the Israeli Defense Forces conduct raids and arrests in these territories. In practice, few Israeli citizens have trouble when entering Area A territories. Area B represents 22 percent of West Bank territory and is mapped out around approximately 440 Palestinian villages. Here, the Palestinian Authority maintains civil control while Israel maintains security control. Area B territories are not supposed to have any Israeli settlements, though Israeli citizens are permitted to travel throughout Area B under certain circumstances, such as to visit religious sites. In Area C, Israel maintains full civil and security authority. Area C represents 60 percent of West Bank land area and is the home to as many as 500,000 Israeli settlers. Palestinians are partially restricted from entering Area C. However, approximately 200,000–300,000 Palestinians, including Bedouins and some farmers, live in Area C, though their access to resources such as water and electricity is significantly restricted.

Balfour Declaration: A diplomatic letter publicly released by the British government on November 2, 1917, that declared support for a Jewish nation following the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire in return for Jewish support during World War I. The Balfour Declaration conflicted with a promise made through T. E. Lawrence for support of a pan-Arab nation in the same territory.

Bedouin: An ethnic group with historical ties to the Arabian Peninsula. The Bedouin were traditionally nomadic, desert-dwelling, tribal peoples who spoke Arabic. Today, approximately 40,000 Bedouin live in Palestine, many in Area C of the West Bank.

Black September: The name for a civil war fought in Jordan beginning in September in 1970 and ending in July 1971. The war was waged between the Palestinian Liberation Organization and the Jordanian monarchy. Since the Arab-Israeli War of 1948, the population of Jordan (which included the West Bank) was around two-thirds Palestinian, making Palestinians the dominant force in Jordanian politics. The war led to the end of citizenship in Jordan for Palestinian refugees and forced the base of the Palestinian resistance movement to southern Lebanon.

British Mandate for Palestine: Following the breakup of the Ottoman Empire and the end of World War I, Great Britain assumed administrative control of former Ottoman-ruled territories east of the Jordan River (Transjordan, now the Kingdom of Jordan) and west of the Jordan River (Palestine). Formal British control began in 1923 and was set to expire in 1948 with the formation of independent states, including a national home for the Jewish people and a state for the Mandate's Arab population as well.

checkpoints: Barriers on transportation routes maintained by the Israeli Defense Forces on transportation routes within the West Bank. The stated purpose of the checkpoints in the West Bank is to protect Israeli settlers, search for contraband such as weapons, and prevent Palestinians from entering restricted areas without permits. The number of fixed checkpoints varies from year to year, but there may be as many as one hundred throughout the West Bank. In addition, there are temporary

roadblocks and surprise checkpoints throughout the West Bank that may number in the hundreds every month. For Palestinians, these fixed and temporary checkpoints—where they may be detained, delayed, or questioned for unpredictable periods of time—make daily planning difficult and can make cities or villages only a few miles away seem like distant points on the map.

crossing points: Crossing points are the gateways into Israel from parts of Palestine, or between Palestine and neighboring countries such as Egypt and Jordan. There are currently five crossing points by land into the Gaza Strip, and most of them have been closed or significantly restricted since the Israeli military blockade was imposed in 2007. There are seventy-three barrier-gate crossing points from West Bank into Israel, and Palestinians with permits have access to thirty-eight of them.

Dome of the Rock: The Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aqsa Mosque ("the farthest mosque") are built on the Temple Mount, considered one of the holiest sites in Judaism. They mark the location where Muslims believe Prophet Muhammad was miraculously transported from Mecca to Jerusalem in a single night to lead other prophets in prayer and also receive instructions from God regarding the rituals of prayer. The site remains a focal point of conflict in Israeli–Palestinian negotiations.

East Jerusalem: The eastern districts of the city of Jerusalem are among the major flashpoints in the Israeli–Palestinian relationship. Both Israel and Palestine have declared Jerusalem to be their respective capitals, and the area is home to some of the holiest sites in Judaism and Islam—the Temple Mount and the Al-Aqsa Mosque and Dome of the Rock. Following the Arab-Israeli War, Israel claimed the western half of the city (which was mostly Jewish) while Jordan claimed the eastern half (which was mostly Muslim and Christian Arab). Israel occupied all of Jerusalem following the Six-Day War in 1967. Israel subsequently annexed an area including East Jerusalem itself and a twenty-five-square-mile territory surrounding it that had formerly been administered by Jordan. Arabs living in East Jerusalem following the Six-Day War were granted permanent resident status in Israel and permitted to apply for Israeli citizenship, though few chose to do so. East Jerusalem was made up of over 60,000 Arabs and just a few hundred Jewish residents in 1967, but by the time the Oslo Accords were negotiated in 1993, Israelis outnumbered Arabs in East Jerusalem by about 155,000 to 150,000.

Fatah: A left-leaning political party that makes up the majority of the Palestinian Liberation Organization coalition. Fatah was founded in 1959 largely by Palestinian refugees who had been displaced by the 1948 Arab-Israeli war. After its founding, Fatah had several militant wings and conducted a number of military actions against Israel, and Israel targeted military and non-military elements of Fatah.

Gaza Blockade: An Israeli military blockade of goods coming into and out of the Gaza Strip by air, land, and sea, which has been imposed since 2007, the year that the political party Hamas seized full control of the Gaza Strip. Israel (as well as the United States, the European Union, Jordan, Egypt, and others) considers Hamas a terrorist organization.

Gaza Strip: A 140-square-mile territory between Egypt, Israel, and the Mediterranean Sea that is currently independently governed by the political party Hamas. Gaza shares a thirty-two-mile-long border with Israel that is sealed off by the Israeli–Gaza barrier. Gaza has been self-governing since 2005, when Israeli military forces withdrew and Israeli settlements were removed. In 2005, Gaza was administered by the Palestinian Authority. In 2006, the political party Hamas won control of the parliament of Gaza in democratic elections, and then severed its relationship with the Palestinian Authority after violent confrontations with members of the party Fatah, which makes up the bulk of the Palestinian Authority. Following the victory by Hamas, Israel imposed a blockade on Gaza,

officially to ensure that weapons such as rockets did not fall into the hands of Hamas, which it considers a terrorist organization. In 2012, the United Nations recognized Gaza as part of the state of Palestine, though Hamas and the Palestinian Authority have never fully reconciled, and the Palestinian Authority has no control in Gaza. Gaza is home to over 1.7 million Palestinians, and the vast majority (75 percent) are considered refugees by the United Nations.

Geneva Accord: A peace initiative that took place in Geneva, Switzerland, in 2003, during the middle of the Second Intifada. Israeli and Palestinian representatives agreed on the outlined details regarding borders of two separate states (a two-state solution), compensation for refugees, and land-swap deals for the removal of settlements. The plan was refined and expanded in 2009 and remains the most detailed proposal of a two-state solution to be tentatively agreed upon by many Israeli and Palestinian officials.

Golan Heights: An area along Israel's border with Syria and Lebanon that Israel annexed from Syria in 1981. The region is important as a strategic military position as well as a source of fresh water.

Green Line: The lines of demarcation agreed upon between Israel and its neighbors during the armistice after the Arab-Israeli War, also known as the 1949 Armistice Line or the "pre-1967 borders." The armistice line is the basis of negotiations for a two-state solution in most major peace initiatives between Israel and Palestine, with some land swaps included. After the Six-Day War in 1967, Israel occupied territory beyond the Green Line, including the West Bank, Gaza, Golan Heights, and the Sinai Peninsula.

Gush Emunim: An activist movement founded in 1974 within Israel that sought the fulfillment of Biblical prophecy through the settlement of the lands known in the Bible as Judea and Samaria and today known as the West Bank. Starting in the late seventies, Gush Emunim led numerous settlement groups to establish a presence in the West Bank, sometimes with the cooperation of the Israeli government and sometimes despite legal sanctions imposed by the government.

Hamas: A political party founded in 1987 as an offshoot of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. Hamas is a Sunni Islamist political party, and its stated aims are to liberate Palestine from Israel and establish an Islamic state in the region that now encompasses Israel and the occupied territories. Hamas gained greater influence in the early 2000s, surging to power on dissatisfaction with the Palestinian Authority, which many Palestinians viewed as corrupt and willing to cede too much to Israel in peace negotiations. After winning parliamentary elections in the Gaza Strip in 2006, Hamas solidified its power in Gaza after violent skirmishes with opposition party Fatah. By 2007, Hamas had effectively taken control of Gaza, driving the Palestinian Authority from power there. Because Israel views Hamas as a terrorist organization, it imposed a crippling economic blockade on the Gaza Strip following Hamas takeover. In the spring of 2014, Hamas and Fatah announced a political reconciliation, though to date Hamas remains the sole power in Gaza.

International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement: A group of international humanitarian organizations founded in 1863 with the purpose of assisting victims of disasters and providing developmental aid to strengthen communities in crisis. The movement is made up of three distinct organizations: the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), which safeguards human rights in conflict zones; the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (IFRC) which coordinates relief assistance missions around the globe; and National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, which address humanitarian needs and are organized on the national level. The Palestine Red Crescent Society is one of the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. It was formed in 1968 and has over 4,000 employees and 20,000 volunteers. Because the Palestinian Authority

administers only a patchwork of territory within the West Bank, the Palestine Red Crescent Society provides some essential services to Palestinian citizens, including ambulance service and some medical care.

Intifada: *Intifada* in Arabic means "to shake off," and the term is popularly used throughout the Arab world to mean a rebellion or act of resistance. In Palestine, *Intifada* usually refers to two intense periods of conflict. The First Intifada began in 1987, after increasing tensions between Palestine and Israel, including a number of civilian deaths. It included years of civil disobedience against the Israeli occupation, as well as armed attacks that led to the deaths of nearly 200 Israelis and over 1,000 Palestinians. The First Intifada began to wind down with the signing of the Oslo Peace Accords in 1993. The Second Intifada began in September of 2000, after a conflict between Palestinian protesters and the Israeli Defense Forces led to deaths. In the ensuing violence from 2000 to 2005, approximately 1,000 Israelis and 3,000 Palestinians were killed.

Israel: A state founded in 1948 to be a national home of the Jewish people. Today, Israel has a population of over 8 million, with slightly over 75 percent of the population Jewish and slightly over 20 percent Arab. Its capital is Jerusalem. Hebrew and Arabic are both official languages.

Israeli Defense Forces (IDF): The Israeli Defense Forces were established with the formation of Israel in 1948, and were formed from the paramilitary group the Haganah. Today, there are over 175,000 active personnel and 450,000 reserves in the IDF. Military service starting at age eighteen is compulsory for most Israeli citizens. In practice, only about half of all eighteen-year-old Israelis end up enlisting in active duty. Israel's Arab population, which makes up 20 percent of the total population of the country, is exempt, but Arabs may serve if they wish. A number of other exemptions exist, though they change from year to year. They include physical or mental disability, religious studies, demonstrated moral objections such as a commitment to pacifism, and enrollment in alternative national civil service programs.

Israel–Gaza barrier: A wall between Israel and the Gaza Strip constructed in 1994 following the Oslo Peace Accords. Much of it was destroyed during the Second Intifada, but it has since been rebuilt. An additional wall between Gaza and Egypt was built in 2005. The barrier has only five crossing points. The Erez crossing is a pedestrian and cargo crossing into Israel at the north end of the strip, a couple of miles north of Gaza City. Since the military blockade of Gaza was put in place in 2007, Gazans must obtain permits to pass through the crossing, which are usually only granted for medical or humanitarian reasons. The Karni crossing, just southeast of Gaza City, is a cargo crossing that has been completely sealed since the start of the military blockade. The Rafah crossing is Gaza's main crossing into Egypt. It was closed by Egypt following Hamas's expulsion of Fatah in 2007, and it has been opened and closed numerous times since. The Kerem Shalom and Sufa crossings are smaller cargo crossings in southern Gaza, near the city of Rafah, and are used mostly for transportation of humanitarian assistance into Gaza.

Israeli–West Bank barrier: A wall between Israel and the West Bank that was built starting in 2002. When completed, it will be approximately 440 miles long. The wall deviates from the 1949 Armistice Line (the "Green Line") that has come to define the boundary between Israel and the West Bank. The 440-mile barrier will leave slightly more than 10 percent of Green Line-defined West Bank on the Israeli side of the wall. This land, known in Israel as the "seam zone," is home to many of the Israeli settlers in the West Bank and also as many as 275,000 Palestinians.

Nakba: Means "catastrophe" in Arabic. Commonly used by Palestinians and other Arabs to refer to the displacement of Arabs before, during, and after the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. The conflict displaced

more than 750,000 Palestinians between 1947 and 1950. Many Palestinian families fled to Egypt, Jordan, or elsewhere outside the lands claimed by Israel in the aftermath of the war. The Nakba still drives Palestinian politics, with generations of refugees continuing to claim a right of return to properties owned before 1948 that are now part of Israel.

one-state solution: A proposed peace plan that would make all of Israel and Palestine a single state, with equal voting and legal protections for all citizens. Though increasingly popular among Palestinian Arabs as the best possible result of the peace process, the one-state solution is opposed by the majority of Israelis because they would become a demographic minority in a unified state. Current peace process negotiations continue to target a two-state solution.

Operation Cast Lead: A three-week-long invasion of the Gaza Strip by the Israeli Defense Forces between December of 2008 and January of 2009. The stated reason for the invasion was to stop rocket attacks from Gaza and weapons smuggling into Gaza. During the invasion, Israeli jets bombed numerous military and administrative facilities in Gaza, including those in densely populated areas of Gaza City and Rafah. More than 1,400 Palestinians were killed in the invasion.

Operation Defensive Shield: A large-scale military operation by the Israeli Defense Forces within the West Bank in 2002, during the height of the Second Intifada. The stated goal of the operation was to arrest or kill Palestinian militants in the region and halt rocket attacks and suicide bombings in Israel. During a period of a little over a month, the Israeli Defense Forces entered West Bank cities and laid siege to the compound of Yasser Arafat and the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah. Around 250 Palestinians were killed, while 30 Israeli soldiers were killed. The operation represented the most significant military incursion into the West Bank since the Six-Day War in 1967.

Operation Pillar of Defense: An Israeli military invasion of the Gaza Strip that lasted eight days, starting on November 14, 2012. The stated goal of the invasion was to stop rocket attacks and disrupt military networks. The Israeli Defense Forces struck over 1,500 targets during the invasion. As many as 167 Palestinians were killed. During the operation, Palestinian rockets launched into Israel killed six Israeli civilians.

Oslo Accords: A series of negotiated agreements between the leadership of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization starting in 1993, during the height of the First Intifada. The goal of the accords was to institute a peace plan and create an interim Palestinian government in anticipation of eventual Palestinian statehood. The Oslo Accords led to the creation of the Palestinian National Authority (subsequently called the Palestinian Authority), a temporary governing body formed from the administration of the PLO.

Palestine: The name *Palestine* is derived from a term used in Ancient Egypt for the region bordering the Egyptian empire along the eastern coast of the Mediterranean. Today, Palestine may refer to the entire region made up of Israel, occupied territories, and territory under control of the Palestinian people, or it may refer to the areas of the West Bank and Gaza, defined as Palestine under the 1949 Armistice Agreement. It can also refer to the limited areas administered completely by the Palestinian people, which make up all of the Gaza Strip and approximately 18 percent of the West Bank. The Palestinian population living in Palestine and abroad is hard to determine but probably numbers around 10 million in 2014. Though the Palestinian Authority claims Jerusalem as its capital, its de facto administrative capital is Ramallah.

Palestinian Authority (PA): A governing body for the Palestinian territories that was established as part of the Oslo Accords initiated in 1993. The Palestinian Authority (or Palestinian National

Authority) was formed out of the administration of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and was dominated in its early years by the political party Fatah. Initially, the Palestinian Authority was meant to be an interim governing body while Israel and Palestine worked toward a final peace agreement between 1994 and 1999. However, an agreement was never reached, and the Palestinian Authority has remained the internationally recognized governing body of the Palestinian people until the present. In 2006, after popular elections in Gaza brought the political party Hamas to power, Hamas militias clashed with Fatah and representatives of the Palestinian Authority, ultimately driving the PA from power in the Gaza Strip. Though a reconciliation between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority was announced in the spring of 2014, the PA's authority continues to extend only to those parts of the West Bank not administered by Israel.

Palestine Liberation Front (PLF): A precursor to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the PLF was a Marxist Arab nationalist movement started in 1961 and based in Ramallah.

Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO): The Palestine Liberation Organization is a coalition of political organizations that was formed in 1964 with the aim of creating an independent Palestinian state. The PLO was first formed in the summer of 1964 during a meeting of the Arab League, and was composed of numerous political and military factions, including Fatah and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). Yasser Arafat led the PLO from 1969 until his death in 2004. The coalition was considered a terrorist organization by Israel and the U.S. until 1991. After negotiations known as the Oslo Accords began in 1993, the PLO became the official governing and diplomatic body of the Palestinian people. In 1994, the Palestinian Authority was formed out of the organizational structure of the PLO and chartered as an interim government of Palestine for the duration of peace negotiations between Israel and Palestine.

Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP): A Palestinian political party founded in the wake of the 1967 Six-Day War. The PFLP had origins in the Pan-Arab movement, as well as in secular socialist political ideology. In the seventies and eighties, PFLP was the second largest political organization in the PLO coalition (behind Fatah). The party generally supports a one-state solution and opposes most negotiations with the Israeli government. It is considered a terrorist organization by the United States, the European Union, and Israel and is known for its commercial aircraft hijackings throughout the 1960s and 1970s.

pan-Arab movement: An ideological movement especially influential in the 1950s and 1960s that sought to make predominantly Arab nations a unified political and cultural force. The modern pan-Arab movement originated in the early twentieth century and was partially responsible for the rebellion of Arabic regions against the Ottoman Empire during World War I. The pan-Arab movement has often been seen as a force that directly conflicts with the Zionist movement, which sought a Jewish homeland within a mostly Arabic region within southwest Asia.

permit system: A complex system of identification-card requirements within Israel and Palestine that governs where individuals can live, work, and travel. Residents of the West Bank must have permits to travel on most roads and special permits to enter or work in Jerusalem and Israel. Palestinians in East Jerusalem must maintain IDs to prove resident status. Most Palestinians are restricted by the permit system from using numerous roads, border crossings, and checkpoints in the West Bank that are limited to Israeli settlers or the Israeli military. On the other hand, Israeli citizens must obtain special permits to enter a portion of the West Bank under control of the Palestinian Authority and are not permitted to enter the Gaza Strip. Gazan citizens are not permitted to enter Israel, except with certain permits obtained for medical or humanitarian reasons.

refugee camp: There are fifty-eight active Palestinian refugee camps throughout the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and neighboring Arab states. See entry for the *United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA).*

right of return: A principle of international law that grants peoples displaced from their homes by war or other humanitarian crises the right to return home if so desired. The right of return has been a contentious point between Israel and Palestinians since the Arab-Israeli War, which displaced more than 750,000 Palestinians, and the Six-Day War, which displaced hundreds of thousands more (some of whom had previously been displaced during the 1948 war). In 1948, the United Nations passed General Assembly Resolution 194, which read in part: "[The General Assembly] resolves that the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbors should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for loss of or damage to property which, under principles of international law or in equity, should be made good by the Governments or authorities responsible." Subsequent UN statements further supported a Palestinian right of return to lands annexed by Israel in 1948. However, Israel disputes the right, and most major peace initiatives since the Oslo Accords have not seriously addressed right of return claims.

Sinai Peninsula: A 23,000-square-mile peninsula that separates Egypt from Israel and the Gaza Strip. The Sinai Peninsula was occupied by Israel as a buffer zone with Egypt following the Six-Day War in 1967 and then returned to Egypt in 1979. The Sinai was a major route of goods smuggled into Gaza during the blockade imposed by Israel starting in 2010, though this border route was largely shut down by the Egyptian military in 2013.

Six-Day War: A conflict in 1967 between Israel and Egypt, Syria, and Jordan. At the time, Gaza was administered by Egypt and the West Bank by Jordan. Following heightened tensions, border skirmishes erupted between Israeli forces and Palestinian guerillas who launched assaults on Israeli military positions from Jordan. After Egypt built up forces near its border with Israel, Israel launched an air-assault in June, destroying Egypt's air force. The conflict drew in other neighboring states and led to a land-war victory for Israel over six days of fighting. After the fighting ended, Israel occupied the West Bank (including East Jerusalem), the Gaza Strip, the Sinai Peninsula, and Golan Heights.

tawjihi exams: A qualifying exam taken by all graduating high school students in Jordan, the West Bank, and Gaza. The exam tests student facility in a range of subjects, including Arabic, science, and math. Students often prepare for the exam for an entire year, because results determine not only where students may go to university, but also what they may study. Major celebrations mark the completion of the exams throughout Palestine.

two-state solution: A proposed peace plan that would create a separate Palestinian state and define clear boundaries between Israel and Palestine. Peace process plans since the First Intifada between Israel and the Palestinian Authority have targeted a two-state solution rather than a one-state solution.

Temple Mount: One of the holiest sites in Judaism and the former location of the Second Temple of Jerusalem, which was destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE. Today, it is the site of Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock, making it also one of Islam's holiest sites. It is also bordered by the Western Wall, or Wailing Wall, the last vestige of the Second Temple and perhaps the most important extant religious site in the world for many Jews. The site remains a focal point of conflict in Israeli–Palestinian negotiations.

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA): The United Nations Relief and Works Agency was established in 1948 by a UN charter to provide material aid to Palestinians after the Arab-Israeli conflict, especially the 750,000 individuals that the UN registered as having been displaced from their homes by the war. The organization began providing housing and services such as health care, infrastructure, and education in designated refugee camps throughout the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and neighboring Arab states. That aid has continued to be provided to descendants of those original refugees, as well as refugees from the 1967 Six-Day War. Today, UNRWA operates fifty-eight camps with over 1.5 million residents, and also provides services to millions of designated refugees living outside the camps. In the Gaza Strip, 1.25 million Palestinians are designated refugees (75 percent of Gaza's total population). In the West Bank, 750,000 residents are designated refugees (28 percent of the West Bank's total population). Over 2 million designated Palestinian refugees live in Jordan, 500,000 designated Palestinian refugees live in Syria, and 450,000 designated Palestinian refugees live in Lebanon.

West Bank: The territory west of the Jordan River that has been occupied by Israel since the Six-Day War in 1967. The peace plan known as the two-state solution would make much of the West Bank part of an independent state along with the Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem. The population of the West Bank is approximately 2,750,000 (including East Jerusalem), with around 2,200,000 Palestinian Arabs, 500,000 Israeli settlers, and a few thousand members of other ethnic groups.

West Bank closures: Transportation routes throughout the West Bank are regulated by obstacles such as checkpoints, roadblocks, barriers, gateways, and other physical restrictions that are officially designed by the Israeli government to protect Israel from violence from Palestinians in the occupied territory. These barriers are either permanently or occasionally manned by the Israeli Defense Forces and significantly inhibit movement within the West Bank for Palestinians. Aside from permanent and spontaneous checkpoints on roads, many roadways require specific permits to enter, with many roads available only for the use of Israeli settlers.

Zionism: A global movement to create and develop a Jewish homeland. The Zionist movement resulted in the formation of Israel in 1948.

III. PALESTINE AND INTERNATIONAL LAW

by Allegra Pacheco, Esq.

While more than one hundred United Nations resolutions support the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, Palestine still remains under Israeli military occupation and has been rejected as a full member of the UN. The following essay offers a brief overview of the key international UN resolutions and legal issues affecting Palestine today, as well as Palestine's status as a "state" among the nations of the world.

PALESTINE AND THE UNITED NATIONS

The status of Palestine has been a contentious political and legal issue in the eyes of the international community since the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of the British Mandate.[1] When the British Mandate came to a close in 1947, the United Nations took responsibility for finding a political solution in Palestine. The UN General Assembly approved the "partition plan"—Resolution 181—which envisioned dividing the former British Mandate Palestine into two independent states, one for Jews and one for non-Jewish Palestinian Arabs.[2] The plan intended for an economic union to be formed between the two states, and for the cities of Jerusalem and Bethlehem to remain open to all sides as autonomous international entities.

Many Palestinian Arabs objected to the proposal immediately on the grounds that the land division was not proportional to the population of the region. While approximately one third of the people of British Mandate Palestine were Jewish, the partition plan granted the majority of Mandate territory to the new Jewish homeland. Objectors also claimed that the plan violated the right of Palestinians to decide for themselves the type of sovereign entity that should be established in the region.

When the British left Palestine in the spring of 1948, the partition plan was not immediately implemented. Instead, the tensions erupted into war,

which ended with Israel possessing more than 78 percent of the territory the British Mandate had set out to divide. Jordan and Egypt controlled the rest.

For Palestinians, the Israeli victory was considered a disaster—they called it the *Nakba*, or "catastrophe." Even beyond the dramatic loss of land, the Nakba came to be defined by Israel's refusal to allow the Palestinians who had fled the violence—as many as 750,000—to return to their homes. Instead, Israeli forces destroyed hundreds of Palestinian villages and Palestinian cities, and seized land, buildings, banks and, other assets (including industrial equipment, agricultural stocks, and vehicles).

In response, the UN General Assembly passed Resolution 194 in December 1948. The resolution called for the return of the Palestinian refugees willing to live in peace with their neighbors, compensation for those not wishing to return, and compensation for the property taken by the Israeli government. This resolution also established the UN Conciliation Commission for Palestine, and tasked it with putting "the Palestinian refugee issue at the heart of resolving the conflict."[3] However, GA Resolution 194 was never implemented, and the Conciliation Commission ceased functioning after several years.

During the June 1967 war between Israel and its Arab neighbors, Israel took the remaining 22 percent of Palestine. These areas—the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza—would come to be known as the "1967 occupied territories." In November 1967, the UN Security Council passed resolution 242, which reinforced the prohibition of acquisition of territory by force, and demanded that Israel withdraw from the occupied territories.[4] However, UN Resolution 242 omitted a right of return for the Palestinian refugees, instead calling for a "just settlement" to the refugee issue.[5] It proposed a "land for peace" formula, suggesting a two-state solution based on the 1967 borders.[6][7] UNSC 242 states:

> The Security Council, expressing its continuing concern with the grave situation in the Middle East, emphasizing the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war and the need to work for a just and lasting peace in which every State in the area can live in security . . . affirms that the fulfillment of Charter principles requires the establishment of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East

which should include the application of both the following principles:

- Withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict;
- Termination of all claims or states of belligerency and respect for and acknowledgement of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every State in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force.

The ideas in UNSC Resolution 242 and the subsequent UN Security Council Resolution 338 became the new paradigm for international resolution of the conflict, and the backbone of all subsequent Security Council resolutions on Palestine. However, many Palestinians expressed concern that it reflected a political compromise on the ability of refugees to return to their former land.

MILITARY OCCUPATION UNDER INTERNATIONAL LAW

As a general rule, stated by the Geneva Conventions and in the charter of the United Nations, international law does not permit or recognize territory acquired by force. However, exceptions have been made if the invasion is short term—but only until hostilities end and a peace agreement is set in place. Typically, an occupation of territory lasts only until the end of a war. During occupation, international humanitarian law delegates the responsibility of restoring order to the army of the controlling power. But international law also recognizes that an occupying force is an enemy/hostile entity, and that the civilians under the control of an occupying force are inherently vulnerable to humanitarian abuse as well as exploitation of economic resources. For this reason, humanitarian law has established an extensive set of regulations to prevent the occupying force from exploiting civilians and their resources.

Occupying powers are charged with ensuring food, water, and sanitary conditions, and must provide or allow international support for education, health, culture, and religious affairs. As much as possible, the military must

preserve the resources in place before war, and are forbidden from changing the laws of the occupied territory for their own material advantage.

International humanitarian law has no clear provisions in place to address an occupation that has continued as long as Israel's occupation of Palestine. Although international law prohibits settlements, and the United Nations has spoken out against the Israeli settlements in the West Bank, it does not provide legal guidance, punitive procedures, or remedies for such a situation. The Rome Statute, which established the International Criminal Court, declared settlement under occupation a war crime—but this cannot be enforced in Israel or Palestine, since neither has agreed to the court's jurisdiction. However, international law is clear that as long as Israel's military remains in Palestine, or retains effective control over the occupied population, the area is considered occupied.

UN RECOGNITION—STILL INCOMPLETE

In 1974, the General Assembly reaffirmed the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination, national independence, and sovereignty, as well as their right to return.[8] It instructed the Secretary General to contact the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) on all matters concerning the Palestinian people.[9] And in November 1988, the PLO recognized the two-state paradigm by declaring the establishment of the state of Palestine in the areas occupied by Israel in 1967—the 22 percent of British Mandate Palestine established by the original 1947 UN partition plan. The UN General Assembly then voted to recognize the political leadership of PLO as representatives of Palestine. Thus, the UN recognized a political entity—if not quite a full state—called "Palestine." The UN granted delegates from the PLO "observer" status, allowing them to attend General Assembly meetings, but not cast any votes.

Under international law, a military occupation and the occupying power's obligations towards the civilian population end by a declaration of the UN Security Council and, ideally, with a political agreement acceptable to all sides, whereby the occupying power terminates its effective and residual control over the territory and its population. The Oslo Accords, first negotiated in 1993, were the closest that Israel and Palestine have come

to such an agreement. However, they were never designed to end Israel's full control over the territories. The accords were designed as "interim agreements" for a period of five years (effective from 1994 to 1999). The intent of negotiators was to set up the Palestinian Authority as a governing body in parts of Palestine and to "test the waters" of transferring authority over to Palestinians in the occupied territories.

Under the Oslo Accords, major authorities—including security, land planning, administration of East Jerusalem, water usage, road construction, and the population registry—remained under Israeli control. The writers of the Oslo Accords envisioned that most of the occupied territories would be under PA control at the end of the interim period and that a final status agreement would be in place to resolve the more difficult political issues still obstructing peace. Fifteen years after the target expiration date of the accords, repeated failures to reach a final status agreement have resulted in the "interim agreement" still in place. Neither side has canceled the Oslo Accords, but Yossi Beilin, one of its Israeli architects, has compared the continued application of the Oslo Accords to "keeping a twenty-year-old in kindergarten."

Without a final status agreement in place, Palestinian leadership has pursued other avenues toward statehood. In 2011, the PLO sought admission to the United Nations as a full member. The PLO based its request on UN General Assembly Resolution 181 II from 1947, which gave "sympathetic consideration" to the Palestine application for membership in the UN, as well as the numerous UN General Assembly resolutions affirming the full respect of Palestinians rights to self-determination as an "indispensable element to the establishment of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East."[10]

The UN Security Council rejected the PLO request for full membership to the wider United Nations, stating that the legal threshold to become a state had not been reached—specifically, that Palestine had not fulfilled the condition of becoming a "peace loving" entity, and lacked effective governmental control over the Gaza Strip.[11]

Despite the Security Council's rejection, the UN General Assembly voted overwhelmingly the next year to upgrade Palestine's position in the UN from "observer entity" to "non-member observer state."[12] The change

granted Palestine the ability to join international organizations and specialized UN agencies such as the World Trade Organization and the International Criminal Court. In April 2014, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas used this status to sign letters of accession to fifteen multilateral treaties and conventions, bringing Palestine closer to statehood in the eyes of international law. Yet Palestine is still without the power to vote in the UN General Assembly and its rights to use the International Criminal Court and other international bodies have barely been tested.

While full membership as a state recognized by the UN remains elusive, international recognition of Palestine as a state has progressed significantly. More than 130 countries, comprising 75 percent of the world's population, recognize the "state of Palestine," and have accorded it diplomatic status. Despite these political victories, the most important obstacle to full statehood remains in place—the continued Israeli military occupation of Palestine. The Israeli military has prevented the formation of borders for the Palestinian state and maintains control over Palestine's economy, land use, utilities, use of resources, and the movement of its goods.

THE PATH TO STATEHOOD

The legal ambiguities that the Israeli occupation has brought to Palestinian statehood have also created an ambiguous situation on the ground. The borders of the Palestinian state are not under the control of the Palestinian government, and their final status has been delegated to political negotiations. The Palestinian president and the Palestine Authority cannot fully carry out their duties in the face of de facto Israeli control. Palestinian citizens' movements are obstructed by the Israeli barrier wall, checkpoints, and Israeli-controlled crossings into and out of Palestine. These obstructions also block the 7 million Palestinian refugees—70 percent of the worldwide Palestinian population—from returning to their homes. As many as 500,000 Israeli citizens, generally referred to as settlers, have moved into illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank area of Palestine, assuming control of key land areas, thoroughfares, water, and natural resources. And the declared capital of Palestine, East Jerusalem, is not in Palestinian hands—it has been annexed by Israel, pulled within Israeli borders and behind Israeli barrier walls. These conditions on the ground

demonstrates how the "statehood" of Palestine is not yet fully substantiated. While most of the basic elements that define a state under international law are present—a permanent population, a government or political authority, and a (partial) capacity to enter in relations with others states—critical factors such as "a defined territory and borders" and the full capacity to carry out the UN Charter have yet to be established.

While international law supports Palestinian statehood, and most of the international community has recognized the "state of Palestine," not one member state of the UN, nor the UN Security Council as a whole, has taken any *effective* steps to end Israel's occupation—the main obstacle to effective Palestinian statehood. Their inaction not only prevents a viable peace from being established in the Middle East but also erodes the effectiveness of international law and diplomacy as a model for justice.

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[1] For more on the Ottoman Empire and the British Mandate of Palestine, see Appendix I, page 295.

[2] The United Nations General Assembly is the body of the UN comprised of all member states and its resolutions reflect the common position of the international community. It does not have enforcement powers like the UN Security Council.

[3] UN Resolution 194 reaffirmed the basic international law principle of the right of every person to return to his home. See Article 13(2) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 10 December 1948: "Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country."

[4] The word "all" territories was omitted from the English version.

[5] Notably, UN SC Resolution 237 (14 June 1967) called on Israel "to facilitate the return of those inhabitants who have fled the areas since the outbreak of hostilities."

[6] For more on the Six-Day War, see Appendix I, page 295.

[7] The UN Security Council is often considered the highest body of the UN—it is charged with enforcing international law, and its resolutions on peacekeeping, sanctions, and the authorization of international military actions bind member nations to their international responsibilities.

[8] A/RES/3236 (XXIX) 22 November 1974.

[9] For more information on the PLO, see the Glossary, page 304.

[10] See UNGA Res 2672 (1970), UN GA Res 3236, UN GA Res 2649.

[11] See the International Court of Justice in 1948 which determined five additional criteria for states seeking full United Nations membership: A candidate must be: (1) a state; (2) peace-loving; (3) must accept the obligations of the Charter; (4) must be able to carry out these obligations; (5) must be willing to do so.

[12] The vote was 138 in favor to 9 against (Canada, Czech Republic, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Panama, Palau, and the United States), with 41 abstentions.

IV. GAZA'S TUNNEL-BASED ECONOMY

by Nicolas Pelham

This essay is adapted from "Gaza's Tunnel Phenomenon: The Unintended Dynamics of Israel's Siege," which first appeared in the Journal of Palestine Studies *in 2012, and has been updated by the author to reflect developments in the time since its publication. The full version of the 2012 essay can be found on the website of the Institute for Palestine Studies, www.palestine-studies.org.*

Until very recently, visitors approaching the Rafah border crossing from Gaza to Egypt could be forgiven for thinking they had stepped back in time to the 1948 Nakba.[1] On the southern reaches of the town, the horizon was interrupted by hundreds of white tents flapping in the wind. The tents sheltered the mouths of hundreds of tunnels, which since 2007 have played a critical role in providing a lifeline for Gazans hit by a punishing siege.

Beneath the awnings, thousands of workers shoveled heavy materials for Gaza's reconstruction. Front-end loaders plowed through the sands, loading juggernauts with gravel and enveloping the entire zone in dust clouds. Tanker trucks filled with gasoline from underground reservoirs; customs officials weighed trucks and issued the tax vouchers required to exit.

The ground that Israel leveled in 2004 to create a barren corridor separating Gaza from Egypt was abuzz with activity on and under the surface, as Gazans operated a tunnel complex that became the driver of Gaza's economy and the mainstay of its governing Palestinian Islamist movement, Hamas.

THE FIRST WALL, THE FIRST TUNNEL

For millennia, Rafah—which sits today where Gaza meets Egypt—was the first stopping place for merchants crossing the desert from Africa to Asia. Israel's establishment in 1948 did not sever the tie, for Gaza was administered by Egypt until Israel's 1967 occupation. Even after, Bedouins crossed the border unimpeded, continuing to mingle and marry. Only in

1981, when Egypt and Israel demarcated their frontier along Gaza's southern edge as part of their recent peace treaty, did separation really set in.

No sooner had the agreement's implementation divided Rafah between Israel and Egypt than Bedouin clans straddling the ten-mile border began burrowing underneath, particularly at the midpoint where the earth is softest. To avoid detection, Gazans dug their tunnels from the basements of their houses to a depth of about fifty feet, headed south for a few hundred feet, and then resurfaced on the Egyptian side of the border, often in a relative's house, grove, or chicken coop.

Israel's first recorded discovery of a tunnel was in 1983. By the end of that decade, tunnel operators were importing such basics as processed cheese, subsidized in Egypt and taxed in Israel, and probably some contraband as well, including drugs, gold, and weapons.

Israel's "soft quarantining" of Gaza—the steadily tightening restrictions on the movement of persons and goods into Israel—began with the Oslo peace process and in preparation for the establishment in the Strip of the Palestinian Authority in 1994. After Oslo's signing, Israel built a barrier around Gaza.

Though access continued through Israel's terminals, periodic closures led Gazans to seek alternatives. When the Al-Aqsa Intifada broke out in September 2000, protesters took the perimeter barrier as one of their first targets.[2] But by June 2001, Israel had replaced it with a higher, grimmer, more impenetrable upgrade. Frequent lockdowns at Israel's terminals and the destruction of Gaza's seaport and airport in 2001, coupled with the militarization of the intifada, intensified the drive for outlets south.

Hence the expansion and upgrading of the tunnels, which for the first time served as safety valves for wholesalers to alleviate the quarantine's artificially created shortages.

ISRAEL'S BLOCKADE, 2006

Given their quest for weapons and the need for funds to finance operations during the Intifada, Palestinian political factions operated the longest and deepest tunnels. The cash-strapped PA sought to co-opt clans along the border, where tunneling was easiest. This fusion of security and business

interests, of militia activity and private entrepreneurship, was to become a hallmark of future development.

Successive Israeli military operations aimed at defeating the Second Intifada and widening the buffer zone between Gaza and Egypt. Israel also targeted the tunnels. In the lead-up to implementing its unilateral Gaza withdrawal plan, Israel razed some 1,500 Palestinian homes within a 325-foot-wide *cordon sanitaire* (the Philadelphi corridor) between Rafah and the border, and reinforced it with a twenty-three-foot-high wall. Egypt's Mubarak regime largely acquiesced in the wall's construction, hoping it would protect his realm from a spillover of the Intifada and the suicide bombing that was threatening lucrative Egyptian tourist resorts along the Sinai Peninsula's riviera on the Red Sea. In addition, Egypt feared that Israel's withdrawal would leave it with responsibility for Gaza's 1.7 million inhabitants and disconnect the territory from the West Bank, thereby ending Arab aspirations for an integral Palestinian state.

In January 2006, four months after Israel completed its Gaza pullout, Hamas won the Palestinian legislative elections. Israel responded by systematically tightening its borders. On March 12, 2006, while Hamas was in negotiations to form a unity government, Israel closed Erez terminal to Gazan laborers in Israel, who once constituted 70 percent of Gaza's workforce. In June 2006, when the Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit was captured by Palestinian militants (and spirited away by tunnel), Israel shut down the Karni terminal, Gaza's primary crossing for goods (already closed for half of the previous six months). Israel also prevented the use of the Rafah terminal for passenger traffic and severely restricted access for the European monitoring mission there.

Israel's array of restrictions on trade, coupled with the need to mitigate the threat of punitive Israeli air strikes targeting the tunnel zone, quickly spurred Palestinians to develop deeper and longer tunnels spanning the width of the Israeli-bulldozed buffer and less vulnerable to sabotage. The tunnel network continued to grow, and infrastructure improved. Even so, the tunnels were ill-prepared for the surge in traffic generated by the near-hermetic seal imposed on Gaza by Israel and Egypt when, in June 2007, Hamas seized control of the Strip, disbanded Fatah's forces, and chased out its leaders.

INDUSTRIAL-SCALE BURROWING, 2007

Hamas's summer 2007 military takeover of the Strip marked a turning point for the tunnel trade. The siege, already in place, was tightened. Egypt shut the Rafah terminal. Israel designated Gaza "a hostile entity" and, following a salvo of rocket fire on its border areas in November 2007, severed fuel imports and cut food supplies by half. In January 2008, after rockets were fired at Sderot, Israel announced a total blockade on fuel, banning all but seven categories of humanitarian supplies. As gasoline supplies dried up, Gazans abandoned cars on the roadside and bought donkeys.

Under Israeli blockade at sea and a combined Egyptian-Israeli siege on land, Gaza's humanitarian crisis threatened Hamas's rule. As the siege intensified, employment in Gazan manufacturing plummeted from 35,000 to 860 by mid-2008, and Gaza's gross domestic product fell by a third in real terms from its 2005 levels (compared to a 42 percent increase in the West Bank over the same period).

Finding access above ground barred, the Islamist movement oversaw a program of industrial-scale burrowing underground. With each tunnel costing $80,000 to $200,000 to build, mosques and charitable networks offered small investment plans with unrealistically high rates of return, promoting a pyramid scheme that ended in disaster. Preachers extolled commercial tunnel ventures as "resistance" activity and hailed workers killed on the job as "martyrs." The National Security Forces (NSF)—a PA force reconstituted by Hamas primarily with 'Izz Al-Din Al-Qassam Brigades (IQB) personnel, but also including several hundred (Fatah) PA defectors—guarded the border, occasionally exchanging fire with the Egyptian army, while the Hamas government oversaw construction activity. Simultaneously, the Hamas-run Rafah municipality upgraded the electricity grid to power hundreds of hoists, kept Gaza's fire service on standby, and on several occasions extinguished fires in tunnels used to pump fuel. As Mahmud Zahar, a Hamas Gaza leader, explained, "No electricity, no water, no food came from outside. That's why we had to build the tunnels."

Larger private investors, including Hamas members who raised capital through their mosque networks, partnered with families straddling the border. Lawyers drafted contracts for cooperatives to build and operate commercial tunnels. The contracts detailed the number of partners

(generally four to fifteen), the value of the respective shares, and the mechanism for distributing shareholder profits.

Fully operational, a tunnel could generate the cost of its construction in a month. A typical partnership encompassed a cross-section of Gazan society, including, for example, a porter at the Rafah land crossing, a security officer in the former PA administration, agricultural workers, university graduates, nongovernmental organization (NGO) employees, and diggers. Investors could quickly recover their outlay.

With each tunnel jointly run by a partnership on each side of the border, Gazan and Egyptian owners generally split earnings equally. The area of tunnel operations doubled to five miles, extending along the border from the Rafah terminal west to Tel Zagreb near the coast. So congested were some parts of the border that diggers had to burrow tunnels one on top of the other, using Google Earth to map routes and make sure they stayed on course.

Teams of six laborers working round the clock in two twelve-hour shifts could dig an average of thirty to fifty feet a day. Once functional, tunnels were constantly upgraded to speed deliveries. Over time, they were fitted with internal lighting, intercoms, and generators to maintain operations during frequent power cuts. The tunnels' rough-hewn edges were smoothed to reduce damage to imports.

From enterprises primarily geared to weapons smuggling, the tunnels rapidly turned into what one trader described as "the lungs through which Gaza breathes." By the eve of Operation Cast Lead in December 2008, their number had grown to at least five hundred from a few dozen mainly factional tunnels in mid-2005; tunnel trade revenue increased from an average of $30 million/year in 2005 to $36 million/month. The PA made ongoing salary payments to some 75,000 PA employees, including some whom they had ordered to stop work. These payments sustained the government's liquidity and purchasing power, and mitigated to some extent the sharp contraction of the Gaza economy that had resulted from the international boycott of Hamas.

"Legalized" by Hamas on the Gaza side of the border, the tunnels remained clandestine on Egypt's side. Thus, while in Gaza the tunnel mouths were moved from the basements of private homes to the open terrain fronting the Philadelphi corridor, in Egypt the tunnels extended deep

inside Egyptian territory. Up to three-quarters of a standard half-mile tunnel was on Egypt's side. And while the tunnel mouths, protected from the elements by white canvas, were open on the Gaza side, in Egypt they remained concealed.

REGULATING A TUNNEL ECONOMY

When Hamas seized the Strip from Fatah in June 2007, its military wing, the IQB, appropriated the Fatah-run tunnels. From the outset, there was a de facto distinction between the factional tunnels, used for military and operational purposes and off-limits to government inspectors and customs authorities, and the privately owned tunnels, which were Gaza's primary source of imports.

Once in control of the commercial tunnels, the Hamas government set about formalizing the smuggling economy through regulation. In the wake of Operation Cast Lead, the Interior Ministry established the Tunnel Affairs Commission (TAC) to act as the regulatory authority for commercial activities. Among its first acts was to issue a list of blacklisted imports, including weapons, alcohol, and tramadol, a painkiller widely used in Gaza. In response to public concern at a rising toll of tunnel casualties, particularly of child workers, the TAC issued guidelines intended to ensure safe working conditions. Over time, it fenced off the site and stationed some three hundred black-clad internal-security personnel at entry points to spot-check the documentation of persons entering and leaving the zone. Tunnel openings were patrolled on motorbike.

Violations were punished. In 2009-10, for instance, the TAC closed at least five tunnels for smuggling tramadol and two for nonpayment of cigarette taxes. It destroyed an additional fifty non-operational tunnels to prevent their use as safe houses or conduits to and from Egypt by "wanted" individuals. "We used to earn thousands smuggling small shipments of hand guns, grenades, bullets, and TNT," said a tunnel operator who first entered the business at the end of the Second Intifada, "but it is no longer worth the risk to be prosecuted by Hamas."

The TAC introduced a tunnel-licensing system to prevent construction in areas deemed of national security (particularly near border fortifications

where outside observation was feared, or in areas reserved for factional tunneling) and to regulate oversupply. Investors seeking clearance to build a new tunnel were required to provide proof of land ownership or notarized proof of authorization of the right to use the land. The TAC also intervened to arbitrate disputes between merchants and tunnel operators, and monitored the market for instances of sharp inflation or evidence of hoarding and price-fixing, particularly of fuel.

In a further sign of formalization, the TAC introduced an increasingly comprehensive customs regime, providing Hamas with a new revenue base that partially compensated for the Ramallah-based PA's monopoly on customs revenues collected at Israel's ports. Haulers weighed their trucks on an electronic weigh station buried in the sand near the entrance to the tunnel zone, obtained chits for their cargoes at an adjoining hut, and upon exit presented the receipts to guards. In September 2008, the Rafah municipality introduced administrative fees, charging tunnel operators a one-time license fee of NIS 10,000 ($2,850)/tunnel and NIS 3,000 for connection to the electricity grid. Evaders were liable to tunnel closure and arrest, deferrable with a NIS 1,000 bail. Further charges were levied on heavily Egyptian-subsidized gasoline and diesel (about NIS 0.5/liter in Egypt), cooking gas (NIS 30/canister), cigarettes (NIS 3/pack), and generators. In addition, Gaza authorities levied a 14.5 percent value-added tax on all goods.

Hamas's regulatory efforts did not go unchallenged, particularly after it taxed what had been a tax-free enterprise. Families and clans in the border area protested interference in their activities. In late November 2007, armed clashes erupted between Hamas government forces and members of the Al-Sha'ir family in Rafah after Hamas destroyed two of its tunnels. But for the most part, the rapidly expanding business opportunities available under Hamas rule trumped lingering resentments. With demand far exceeding supply, tunnel operators earned $50 for ferrying a hundred-pound sack through the tunnels.

A decade earlier, all but 1 percent of Gaza's total imports came from, or via, Israel. By the eve of Operation Cast Lead, the ratio had nearly reversed. Although the tunnels were often rudimentary, the trade cycle was generally faster than through Israeli terminals, and less laden with customs red tape. Normal deliveries arrived within three to five days of placing an order—

faster than pre-takeover orders from Israel. Operators responded rapidly to demand. When Israel reduced gas supplies, smuggled canisters quickly surfaced on the market. Vaccines from Egypt entered Gaza following reports of disease sweeping chicken farms. Ahead of holidays, traders imported toys, live sheep, and fresh beef from Egypt.

Both Egypt and Israel had mixed reactions to the tunnel operations. For Israel, the reorientation of Gaza's trade to Egypt tempered the international outcry over the blockade and widened the divide between Gaza and the West Bank. For Egypt, smuggling offered copious opportunities for bribes (at both the local and national levels) from a hitherto unprofitable region. Yet both countries also saw tunnel growth as a security threat they could scarcely monitor, let alone control. In an effort to interrupt the traffic, Israel repeatedly deployed drones and manned aircraft to bomb Gaza's tunnels, while Egypt stepped up tunnel detection and demolition. Tunnel owners responded by improving their design and digging to depths of over twenty-five meters.

EGYPT'S COUNTERMEASURES

Israel's repeated attacks on Gaza culminated in the devastating Operation Cast Lead of winter 2008-9. Although Hamas's detractors in Gaza claimed the tunnels served as an escape hatch for some senior Hamas officials during the war, aerial bombardment of the Rafah border severely damaged the network, resulting in a temporary suspension of commercial traffic. Meanwhile, the land, air, and sea blockade remained fully in force.

As part of the internationally brokered cease-fire, Israel secured U.S. agreement to act against the smuggling routes supplying Gaza. Separately, Egypt committed to build (under U.S. military supervision) an eighty-foot-deep underground steel barrier along its border with Gaza aimed at blocking the tunnels within a year. By the end of 2010, it claimed to have sabotaged some six hundred tunnels by various means, including plugging entrances with solid waste, sand, or explosives, and flooding passages with sewage. Use of teargas and other crowd-control techniques inside the tunnels resulted in several deaths.

"The war marked a turning point in how Egypt's security dealt with us," remarked one tunnel operator. "In the past, they would look the other way

when a lorry stopped to unload at a tunnel mouth, but since May 2009 they . . . raid the homes, sheds, farms, and shops of our Sinai suppliers."

But Egypt's countermeasures never quite matched its policy statements. From the start, Egypt cited logistical problems, such as difficulties hammering steel plates more than fourteen feet deep in stony ground. Tunnel operators cut through completed segments with blowtorches, nullifying the multimillion-dollar project for the cost of a few thousand dollars. Reluctance to forgo the bribes accruing from smuggling further compromised official resolve. Egyptian security forces often targeted the shallowest and most easily detected tunnels, leaving the more developed and profitable ones untouched. Tellingly, construction slowed where tunnel activity was most concentrated. Hamas's success in mounting a solidarity network to condemn the Mubarak regime for enforcing the siege further eroded Egypt's political will. Frustrated, the U.S. Congress suspended technical support for the underground steel barrier in mid-2011.

Motivated by family and clan unification, as well as economic benefits, Bedouin and Palestinians on Egypt's side of the border also resisted Egypt's security measures. "We're Palestinians working for the sake of Palestine," said a tunnel laborer in Egyptian Rafah. To foil Egyptian security, Bedouin operators sometimes tapped into well-armed clan defense committees versed in Sinai's topography from centuries of roaming. There were sporadic reports of clashes between Bedouin irregulars and Egyptian forces seizing contraband.

THE TUNNEL EXPANSION AND GAZA'S ECONOMIC RECOVERY, 2009

Meanwhile, the cease-fire at the end of Operation Cast Lead enabled Hamas to undertake repairs on the partially destroyed tunnels and to oversee a major overhaul of the complex, even reducing taxes to stimulate the work. Fear of Egyptian detection prompted operators to extend their tunnels to a length of one mile and to deepen them to up to 130 feet below ground. Operators reinforced tunnels first with wooden planks, then cement blocks and metal to allow sufficient widening for raw materials to pass through without risking tunnel collapse. Rope ladders flung down the shafts were replaced by electric elevators, while the thirteen-foot-long sledges (*shahata*)

pulled by winches were replaced by carts running on rails, much as in coal mines.

Within two years, capacity had increased tenfold. By late 2010, large commercial tunnels were estimated to be shifting up to 170 metric tons of raw materials each per day. The number of tunnels transporting livestock rose from three in 2008 to at least thirty in mid-2010. There was also less loss and damage, since the longer tunnels were harder for Egypt's security to find, and conditions inside the tunnels had substantially improved. Economies of scale and diversified sources of supply lowered costs. By the summer of 2011, 60 percent of traders reported that prices had fallen to equal or below the pre-siege level for goods from Israel.

For example, a liter of fuel (initially sold in sand-riddled plastic soda bottles) cost four times more than in Israel in 2008; by 2009 fuel (pumped through three-quarter-inch pipes at a rate of 20,000 liters/hour) sold at a quarter of Israel's price. By mid-2011, prices for Turkish cement (Gazans snubbed Egypt's lower-quality products) had plummeted from $1,500/ton at the height of the closures in mid-2008 to the pre-siege price of $100. The cost of shipping a fifty-kilo sack of goods fell from $50 to $5. "There are at least 1,500 underground tunnels now," said an owner. "Most are bigger and better than ever before, and all of them are open for business. The result is more competition, more price wars, and less work for everyone."

Demand grew as capacity improved and prices fell to within a range average Gazans could afford. Between 2008 and 2010, traders of household goods reported a 60 percent rise in their import of goods via the tunnels. By mid-2010, Gaza's retailers reported that shortages resulting from Israeli restrictions had been reduced "to a reasonable extent or more." Wholesalers rapidly replenished their empty warehouses. By mid-2009, cars—hitherto cut into three and welded together in Gaza—were arriving whole, first dragged through the tunnels by bulldozers and then driven through expanded tunnels. To satisfy demand, tunnel operators tapped into contraband, particularly of cars, arriving from Libya after Qaddafi's retreat from Cyrenaica left his arms depots and ports open for looting.

Expansion also facilitated the import of inputs and raw materials, precipitating what has been perhaps the tunnels' greatest achievement: kick-starting Gaza's postwar reconstruction while donors remained on the sidelines. While world leaders promised billions at showcase conferences in

Sharm Al-Sheikh's luxury hotels, but failed to persuade Israel to lift its ban on construction materials, the tunnels enabled Gazans to rebuild their enclave themselves.

Gaza morphed into a construction site. Roadsides were piled high with building materials from Egypt. UN Habitat estimated that, based on the materials allowed in by Israel, it would take eighty years to rebuild the six thousand housing units destroyed in Operation Cast Lead and accommodate the growth in population over five years of closure; tunnel flows reduced that lagtime to a more manageable five. Indeed, so rapid was the pace of construction that by mid-2012 real estate agents reported that they were struggling to locate prospective buyers for the new apartments.

It was not only Gaza's housing stock that began to recover. Farmers resorted to tunnel imports to circumvent Israel's ban on seeds, pesticides, irrigation pipes, and basic agricultural tools such as hoes and buckets. The increased affordability of inputs helped factories resume operations: Hamas officials claimed that by October 2011, half the fourteen hundred factories destroyed during Operation Cast Lead were back in production. A food-processing plant resumed operations after items banned by Israel—including preservatives, plastic wrapping and packaging made in Egypt, and spare parts—arrived from Switzerland via tunnel.

All told, the tunnel expansion precipitated a recovery that rapidly reversed much of Gaza's earlier decline. From 2005 to 2009, Gaza's per capita GDP contracted by 39 percent in real terms, with the tunnels providing at best limited relief. After Operation Cast Lead, the tunnels facilitated what a September 2011 World Bank report described as "exceptionally high growth," notching 28 percent in the first half of 2011. Unemployment dropped from 45 percent before Operation Cast Lead to 32 percent by mid-2011. Rafah's markets bristled with shoppers and café-goers late into the night, its backstreet ATMs distributing $100 bills.

THE LIMITS OF A TUNNEL-BASED ECONOMY

Even as the World Bank was touting Gaza's exceptional growth, however, the structural flaws impeding Gaza's full-fledged reconstruction persisted. With few exports capable of generating sustainable growth, Gaza's consumption was capped. By 2010, the markets were saturated, with

improved supply lines outstripping demand, while wages fell sharply, not least due to increased use of cheaper Egyptian labor. Intense competition pushed tunnel earnings and prices down even faster. With supply already exceeding demand, Israel's June 2010 decision to lift its ban on the import of commercial goods (following the international outcry over the Mavi Marmara aid-flotilla incident) triggered a market glut. Retailers hitherto limited to imports via the tunnels revived their former ties with Israeli counterparts.

By the end of 2010, operations at over half of Gaza's commercial tunnels had reportedly been suspended. Those that survived launched efficiency drives, reducing operating hours and cutting labor so as to remain commercially viable. Increasingly, tunnel activity narrowed to goods that were competitive because Israel either heavily taxed alternatives, such as fuel, or banned them. The latter included most raw materials, all items defined as "dual use" (e.g., construction materials, machinery, chemicals, and spare parts), and almost all export goods. "Israel's blacklist is the smugglers' green list," commented a prominent Gaza businessman who imports Egyptian cacti for his nursery through the tunnels.

By spring 2012, signs that the economy had reached the ceiling achievable through the tunnel conduits were increasingly visible. According to figures from the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics for the first quarter of 2012, unemployment had begun to climb, and the previous high rates of growth had fallen back sharply. Despite Egypt's acquiescence to increased passage through the Rafah terminal, most of Gaza's 240,000 refugee youth had never left the enclave, and 51 percent of them remained unemployed. Continued restrictions by the Egyptian authorities on the entry of tanker trucks bound for Gaza into the Sinai Peninsula left the enclave in darkness for much of the night. Israeli warships cruised on the horizon, a visible reminder of the three-mile limit Israel imposed on Gaza's seas. The claustrophobic feeling of being trapped by land, air, and sea had not disappeared.

Initially in the wake of Mubarak's 2011 ouster, the tunnel economy enjoyed a boom. As the internal-security apparatus took flight, Egypt's remaining impediments disappeared. Tunnel mouths placed deep inside Egyptian territory resurfaced close to the border, in the process taking an obvious toll on Egyptian Rafah's housing stock, where gaping cracks

appeared even in recent construction. Construction on the underground steel barrier was formally halted. Tunnel owners reported next to no impounding of materials, only token destruction of tunnel mouths, and a marked decrease in demands for bribes. Many Egyptian operators who had been sentenced in absentia and who had paid hefty bribes to avoid arrest were granted amnesty. Heightened domestic opposition in Egypt to the ongoing Gaza blockade and increased activity by Bedouin armed groups offered tunnel traffickers additional protection.

In deference to Cairo, Hamas had from the start banned the use of commercial tunnels for passenger traffic, but reversed this policy after the Mubarak regime fell. Meanwhile, the new Egyptian authorities, with much fanfare, eased the restrictions on passage through the Rafah terminal. However, with restrictions still in place, the tunnels offered a viable fast track that circumvented much of the red tape of the overland crossing. To sidestep the Egyptian restriction limiting each traveler to a single case, passengers traveling through the terminal could plastic-wrap their bags on the Gaza side of the border, send their excess luggage via a tunnel courier, and find it waiting for them on arrival in Egypt. To regulate passenger traffic, the TAC introduced a system of prior coordination that took two days rather than the two months required for applications to cross via the Rafah terminal. At the tunnel mouth, a Hamas policeman speedily processed passengers on arrival in Gaza, providing visitors with a chit which they would hand back when leaving.

Moreover, while the Rafah crossing closed at five p.m. (later extended to eight p.m.), the tunnels operated around the clock. Male applicants ages fifteen to forty, some 35 percent of whom were generally barred entry to Egypt on security grounds, benefited in particular, but all kinds of travelers, from Pakistani academics and Palestinian workers fleeing Libya to families on holiday, used the tunnel.

Students studying at Sinai’s sole university in El Arish qualified for a special tariff, allowing them to return home for weekends with their families without the Egyptian red tape of the border crossing, and without forfeiting their visas. There was even a tunnel for VIPs with a carpet running along its length. Costs for the six-hundred-yard crossing, which previously reached hundreds of dollars, fell to NIS 100 ($30).

Relaxed controls also served to alleviate the ban on exports, the other grueling aspect of the siege. These included scrap metal (smelted in Sinai and re-imported as steel rods for construction and possibly military use), dapple racing horses (which all but disappeared from Gaza due to high Egyptian demand), ammunition (which spiked in demand during Egypt's 2011 revolution), and surplus produce—watermelons, apples, and eggs—resulting from Gaza's drive for food self-sufficiency. That said, Egypt's lower labor costs and purchasing power rendered most Gaza produce uncompetitive, and Gaza's manufacturing base, traditionally geared to the Israeli and West Bank markets, was slow to adapt to Egyptian needs. Egypt-bound traffic comprised mainly re-exports of goods from Israel for which there was Egyptian demand, including heavily taxed items such as shoes, hair gel, and mobile phones.

Yet the political unrest following Mubarak's ouster in February 2011 destabilized the tunnel economy as well. Led by Hamas leaders, Gazans looked to Egypt's new Islamist leadership to dismantle the siege structures and open the crossing to overland goods traffic. Certainly, initial euphoria at the prospect of a new laissez-faire era in Egyptian–Gaza relations dimmed as Egypt's ruling military council, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), consolidated its hold. In a sign of renewed leverage over Gaza, and reflecting a desire to cut their subsidy bill, the Egyptian authorities blocked tanker trucks en route to Gaza hauling heavily subsidized Egyptian gasoline. Although some fuel continued to trickle through the tunnels, the enclave again experienced outages of up to eighteen hours per day, as in the harshest days of the siege. The shortages not only rendered life uncomfortable, they deprived it of the dynamo to power more reconstruction. Inside Gaza, the Hamas government faced widespread charges of hubris for wildly overestimating the early benefits accruing from the Arab awakening.

SHIFTING POWER IN GAZAN SOCIETY

Seven years of Hamas rule over Gaza and sponsorship of the tunnel trade brought changes to the Strip whose impact could be felt at a popular level. Public infrastructure—including the parliament and other government buildings, police stations, and mosques—had been leveled or severely

damaged in Israel's Operation Cast Lead bombardment. The Hamas government, armed with the proceeds from import taxes and an expanded tunnel infrastructure capable of transporting heavy goods and machinery, repaired and upgraded infrastructure. Hamas also widened the Salah Al-Din Road (the Rafah–Gaza City highway) to accommodate increased traffic from the south, and, in Gaza City itself, began beautifying prominent landmarks, sodding sandy areas, dredging the port, installing traffic lights, and rebuilding its coastal riviera to the south, which officials claimed would one day rival Tel Aviv's.

In an economy blighted by unemployment resulting from Israel's ban on Gazan workers, the bombardment of its manufacturing base, and the closure of export markets (above and beyond a significant slowdown in donor-funded development projects), the tunnels emerged as Gaza's largest nongovernmental employer. The tunnel industry attracted construction workers once employed in Israel from across the Gaza Strip. For a time, tunnel workers were the best paid in Gaza: in 2008, the average daily wage was $75, five times Gaza's median wage, according to official Palestinian figures, and more than West Bank Palestinians earned building Israel's Jewish settlements. The tunnel trade was also the largest overall employer of youth. School dropouts scrounging NIS 20/day as street peddlers earned ten times that much in the tunnels. Although market saturation and recourse to Egyptian labor later depressed daily wages to more like NIS 80, even this was quadruple a farmhand's wage. With each fully functioning tunnel employing twenty to thirty people, by 2010 the tunnel industry was estimated to employ some 5,000 tunnel owners and 25,000 workers, supporting about 150,000 dependents, or 10 percent of Gaza's population.

Such was the turnaround in the local economy that Gaza City had a surfeit of new hotels, restaurants, and beach cafés, which attracted not only the new moneyed elite the tunnels had fostered, but also exiles returning to the Strip (sometimes via tunnels), and even visitors from northern Sinai. Gaza's new luxury hotel, Al-Mashtal, optimistically bought cocktail glasses, while visiting businessmen from the West Bank complained that the latest-model sports cars and Hummers could be seen on Gaza's streets long before they surfaced in Ramallah. Real estate brokers said the multiplier effect of the increased spending power spurred a threefold increase in real estate prices.

Nonetheless, Gaza's macroeconomic growth figures disguised wide disparities in the distribution of the new wealth. In geographical terms, prosperity followed the new employment opportunities: the north languished, while the south boomed. Gaza's traditional mercantile elite, which had developed ties with Israeli and Western European suppliers, found its status and influence in Gaza increasingly sapped by a new generation of smugglers tapping into ancient informal trade routes that extended southward into Sudan, and who quickly diversified their supply sources to include Egyptian, Chinese, and Turkish suppliers. And while yesterday's commercial elite excelled in foreign languages acquired through travel and education, the new bourgeoisie of smugglers was less educated but had the benefit of cross-border clan connections and the backing of Gaza's Islamist rulers. Thus, the tunnels became a key driver of upward mobility and social change, empowering previously marginalized groups and spawning a class of nouveaux riches.

Further encroaching on traditional business elites, tunnel owners used their financial clout to diversify upstream into retail, developing their own networks of agents to increase their market hold. Spared the cost of tunnel fees and privy to market information gained from hauling goods, they undercut retail prices, prioritized their own goods over wholesaler deliveries, and even distributed their own catalogues direct to consumers. On occasion they flooded the market to suppress prices and push wholesalers to the point of collapse. "No matter what we do, we cannot compete with the tunnel owners. They have decreased our income by 70 percent at least," complained Ala' Abu Halima, a long-standing Gaza merchant specializing in agricultural inputs.

Western-backed NGOs and the United Nations, whose required funding criteria barred them from purchasing smuggled goods and therefore stymied their reconstruction efforts, vociferously campaigned to end Israel's siege. UN officials noted the paradox whereby U.S.-led financial restrictions, which prohibited the United Nations from accessing tunnel supplies, gave their supposed target, Hamas, a distinct advantage. Refugee families turned increasingly to Hamas rather than depend on the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), the organization charged with sheltering them (and three-quarters of the Strip's population). UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Robert Serry, fearing that the international

community was hemorrhaging influence, complained in a May 2010 briefing to the Security Council that "the flourishing illegitimate tunnel trade permits smugglers and militants to control commerce," while "international agencies and local contractors who wish to procure goods entering through legitimate crossings too often stand idle due to the Israeli closure."

BUSINESS AND POLITICS

Armed with resources to govern from the tunnel proceeds, Hamas transformed itself from a non-state actor with a social and charitable network, underground movement, and guerrilla force into a governing authority with a well-equipped internal security force, bureaucracy, and economy. The commercial tunnels and the Sinai population's growing economic dependence on trade with Gaza gave Hamas the soft power to project its influence into the Sinai Peninsula, even as the factional tunnels enabled its military wing to augment this "soft" influence by exercising its own leverage there.

Yet the tunnel economy has also tarnished Hamas's reputation for transparency, accountability, and financial propriety. The Hamas authorities were widely criticized from the outset for making tunnel licenses conditional on appointing its members to the boards of tunnel cooperatives, often on preferential terms. The government's decision to wash its hands of the pyramid scheme for tunnel investment mentioned above, which had been endorsed by prominent Hamas preachers and had left numerous investors bereft of their savings, marked the first major dent in its domestic credibility. Thereafter, Islamist and secular opponents alike adopted the discourse of corruption that Hamas had hitherto used to undermine Fatah. A Salafi jihadi from Gaza's Middle Areas expressed it thus:

> Before entering government, Hamas acolytes focused on religious sermons and memorizing the Quran. Now they are most interested in money, tunnel business, and fraud. Hamas used to talk about paradise, but now they think about buying land, cars, and apartments. After the evening prayers, they would go to study, now

the Imam looks at ways to make money. Before they prayed in the mosque, now they pray at home.

Hamas's lack of transparency about its use of its tunnel earnings compounds suspicions. While Hamas officials said local revenues comprised half the government's $750 million annual budget for 2011, local businessmen calculated the earnings to be higher, raising questions about where the funds go and why there are repeated shortfalls in monthly civil-service salary payments. A similarly cavalier approach to child labor and tunnel fatalities damaged the movement's standing with human-rights groups, despite government assurances dating back to 2008 that it was considering curbs. During a police patrol that the author was permitted to accompany in December 2011, nothing was done to impede the use of children in the tunnels, where, as in Victorian coal mines, they are prized for their nimble bodies. At least 160 workers have been killed in the commercial tunnels, according to Hamas officials.

The tunnels had been a mixed bag for Hamas. While its detractors praise—albeit begrudgingly—its success in reducing the impact of Israel's stranglehold, perceptions of corruption inside the organization have intensified. During the renewed fuel shortages of spring 2012, there were widespread allegations that Hamas leaders received uninterrupted electricity and that gasoline stations continued to operate for the exclusive use of Hamas members. True or not, they fed a growing mood of recrimination that Hamas had profited from the siege.

AN END OF THE TUNNELS?

The peaks and troughs of Gaza's tunnel economy came to an abrupt halt in July 2013, with Egypt's overthrow of Morsi and launch of its Sinai operation. Three years of exponential growth and even tentative development shifted into reverse. Construction ground to a halt; Hamas lost its revenue base, and Gaza its strategic safety valve from Israeli pressure.

Having geared its economy to the tunnels, Hamas struggled to finance its rule. Bereft of much of the $1 million per day it had earned in tunnel dues, in August 2013 the government put its 46,000-strong army and bureaucracy on half pay, and in early 2014 delayed paying even that,

sparking rare public sector protests. Initially it sought to increase taxes on the trickle of goods that still managed to cross. Cigarette taxes tripled in a week; cement prices quadrupled. It also feared that the increased hardship could provoke rising discontent. Instead of the promised free-trade zone with Egypt, Gaza faced a buffer zone, or *cordon sanitaire*. Without fuel, Gaza's power plant shut down, increasing blackouts to some sixteen hours per day. In places, the sewage system collapsed, spilling into the street. In parallel with their disruption of passenger flows underground, Egypt's security forces closed the Rafah terminal. Claustrophobic Gaza was an open-air prison again.

At a time of such radical oscillations in the region, predicting scenarios is a hazardous exercise. But unlike previous shocks to the tunnel economy, which Hamas always managed to subvert, this latest assault felt terminal. Fearing potential unrest, Hamas's siege mentality revived. Only months after their triumphal tours feted on the shoulders of the faithful of the region's leading mosques, Hamas's leaders prepared for lockdown again. Despairing of their politicians finding an exit and determined to buck the region-wide Islamist downfall, the military wing flexed its muscles. The first Islamist movement to take power on the Mediterranean spoke increasingly of making a last stand. Its forces erected night-time checkpoints in the center of Gaza City, closed news agencies, and detained a widening circle of suspected opponents. The head of a newly opened Egyptian community association in Gaza City was hauled in for questioning. The Qassam Brigades staged military parades, firing guns into the air, and giving the Muslim Brotherhood's four finger salute.

Struggling to survive without the tunnels, Hamas considered its political options. Its overtures to Egypt rebuffed by the new anti-Islamist military leadership, it toyed with greater dependency on Israel. Its finance minister committed to introduce a tax on imports from Israel— in effect promoting double taxation, since Israel already collected taxes on goods crossing into Gaza to fund President Abbas's Palestinian Authority. Construction materials began to sporadically flow again from Israel into Gaza. For the first time ever, 400 truckloads passed over its Kerem Shalom crossing in day. "If demand grows, we're ready to step in," said an Israeli army officer.

But Israel's professed altruism had its limits. Seeking to buttress Abdel Fattah al-Sisi's regime and join his Jordanian, Saudi, and Emirati alliance,

the Netanyahu government increasingly adopted their zero-tolerance approach to the Brotherhood and its offshoots. Following Morsi's overthrow and the replacement of Ehud Barak with Moshe Yaalon as Netanyahu's defense minister, Israel reneged on upholding the terms of the cease-fire agreement with Hamas that the Egyptian president had helped broker in November 2012, which had provided for the phased opening of Gaza's crossings with Israel. It reduced the fishing limits agreed in the 2012 truce. And although trade rose, it remained severely restricted. Israel continued to prevent the passage of raw materials for commercial use, and, after announcing its discovery of a tunnel from Gaza into Israel that seemed to be for military use, halted supplies to donor projects as well. With tunnel traffic all but terminated from Egypt, Gaza's development, other than a Qatari-financed road project, largely ground to a halt.

Their exit routes blocked by Egypt and Israel, Hamas turned as a last political resort to President Abbas's Palestinian Authority, from which it had split in 2007. Fitful earlier attempts at reconciliation with Abbas's government in the West Bank had largely petered out. But with Abbas weakened by his the failure of his strategy to negotiate a two-state settlement with Israel, and Hamas weakened by its inability to meet the needs of the population in Gaza, desperation drove both to seal a deal and form a united government.

Mistrust continued to hinder the deal. Both feared subversion, and suspected the other of using the agreement to secure a foothold in their territory. In addition, Israel strongly opposed the government. In apparent breach of their understanding, Abbas refused to finance the civil servants Hamas had recruited to run Gaza and seemed almost allergic to returning to Gaza at the helm of a united government. Facing further attrition, Hamas's military wing increasingly despaired of its politicians' plans to rescue them, and resorted to arms in July 2014.

By this point, Hamas's commercial tunnels were dysfunctional. But Hamas put unemployed laborers to work digging military-grade tunnels, in an attempt to burrow into Israel's unilaterally-declared buffer zone and on into Israel. After six weeks of fighting, Israel declared it had destroyed this military network as well. At the same time, negotiators in Cairo, urged by Europe and the United States, discussed the resumption of formal trade and traffic in and out Gaza for the first time since 2005.

In the decade-plus of Gaza's isolation and the growth of the tunnel network into a regional force, the tunnels had sustained an economy that prevented Gaza's collapse, but they also fueled unrest, fostering the Bedouin uprising in the Sinai that threatens to destabilize Egypt and regional jihadi militancy. Within Gaza, they eroded central authority through bribery and corruption. They served as a homemade engine of Gaza's reintegration into a region, but did not equip Gaza with the tools required to rebuild and sustain a productive society.

To this end, all parties—Egypt, Israel, Gaza, the Palestinian Authority, and the UN—saw the benefit of a reformalization of Gaza's economic relations Gaza's tunnels had always been a stopgap, a temporary fix to allow the enclave to more or less survive after its post-disengagement abandonment. In the process of uprooting them, Israel and Egypt had brought great hardships to Gaza's its population. Twenty-five percent of its nearly 1.8 million have been left homeless, thousands of houses have been destroyed, and perhaps ten thousand people wounded. But if the conflict would finally result in Gaza's escape from a blockade and re-entry into the formal economy, parents wondered whether their children might yet reap the benefit.

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[1] For more on the Nakba, see the Glossary, page 304.

[2] The Al-Aqsa Intifada is also known as the Second Intifada. For more information on the Intifadas, see the Glossary, page 304.

V. PALESTINIAN DEMOGRAPHICS

The following statistical table is taken from the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, which is administered by the Palestinian Authority. It represents the projected head count in 2013. The figures used in this book are based on projected increases for 2014. Though the rate of growth has slowed over the last few years, the populations of both Gaza and the West Bank are expanding faster than the global average growth rate of 1.14 percent.

Total Population: 4,420,549
West Bank: 2,719,112
Gaza: 1,701,437

Rate of annual population increase: 2.94 percent/year
West Bank: 2.62 percent/year
Gaza: 3.44 percent/year

Percentage of (0–14)-year-olds: 40.1
West Bank: 38.0
Gaza: 43.4

Percentage of (15–29)-year-olds: 29.9
West Bank: 30.0
Gaza: 29.8

Percentage of (29–60)-year-olds: 25.6
West Bank: 27.2
Gaza: 23.1

Percentage of (60+)-year-olds: 4.4
West Bank: 4.8
Gaza: 3.7

VI. IN WAITING

by Riyam Kafri Abu Laban

The following prose poem was written by Riyam Kafri Abu Laban and is included here to stand in for sentiments expressed to us by nearly every one of our interviewees, whether their narratives were included in this collection or not. To read Riyam's narrative, see *page 97**.*

Welcome to the land of waiting. People here are born waiting. Waiting to return to a homeland lost, and, from the looks of it, in the most desperate moments, lost forever.

Waiting to return to a home they still carry a key for in their hand, and a memory of in their heart; an image hidden in the folds of their dreams, and which, sadly, in the most realistic moments they know no longer exists.

In Palestine you wait for Ramadan, just like you wait for a breath of fresh air in a crowded restaurant in New York City. You wait for a permit to travel. You wait for schools to open, for the strike to end, for the checkpoint to be removed, for the accident rubble to be cleared. You wait for the Allenby Bridge to empty, for the doctor to finally come in on time.

In Palestine you wait. You wait for your dreams to come true.

You wait to leave the refugee camp, you wait to leave the village, you wait to arrive in Ramallah, you wait for destiny to embrace you—but she really never does. In fact, at the first stop she slaps you hard in the face and leaves her mark on you, and then you spend a lifetime waiting for that wound to heal. It never does.

In Palestine you wait to graduate, you wait to find a job, you wait for the next job to be better than the first.

In Palestine you wait to get married, then you wait to have children, then you wait for them to grow. Then you wait for them to become doctors —but trust me, they will not.

In Palestine you wait in line endlessly to receive permission to see the Palestine that is yours. And after you finally get a chance to see her, you realize she looks nothing like what your grandparents described, and nothing like the country your mother cries over. You wait to see her, only to realize that she has moved on, and did not wait for you.

In Palestine you wait for the birth of a child anxiously, with the hope she will not be born on a checkpoint.

In Palestine you wait for the hunger strike to end. You wait for sons and daughters to be released from prison—only to be rearrested again, at the next checkpoint while on their way to find a job and start a life.

In Palestine you wait for your paycheck only to have it hijacked by hungry loan payments and red hot gasoline prices.

In Palestine, you wait endlessly in Qalandiya to get home. Keep waiting. This might take hours.

You wait for the summer to end in the hope that winter will bring more peace, and you wait for winter to end in the hope that summer will bring more warmth.

In Palestine you wait for everything and everyone.

In Palestine you wait for the next eruption, the next Intifada, the next incursion, the next war—which always comes.

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This book began largely with Voice of Witness in mind, but we decided to independently fund our book in order to get started. In December 2010 we ran a successful fundraising campaign through Kickstarter.com, which allowed us to do five months of concentrated work in the West Bank, conducting interviews and gathering research. A year and a half later we signed a contract to officially work with Voice of Witness.

We are grateful to everyone who took part in our campaign. A very special thank you to our donors at the publisher level: the Mohrbacher

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ABOUT THE EDITORS

CATE MALEK and MATEO HOKE began working together in 2001, while studying journalism at the University of Colorado-Boulder. Their interest in human rights journalism began on a project in which they spent eight months interviewing undocumented Mexican immigrants about their daily lives. Cate now lives in the West Bank where she works as an editor and teaches English at Bethlehem University. She previously worked as a newspaper reporter, receiving multiple Colorado Press Association awards. Mateo holds a master's degree from the University of California-Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism. In addition to his work in the Middle East, he has reported from the Amazon jungle and the Seychelles. His writing has received awards from the Overseas Press Club Foundation and the Knight Foundation, among others.

The VOICE OF WITNESS SERIES

The Voice of Witness book series, published by McSweeney's, empowers those most closely affected by contemporary social injustice. Using oral history as a foundation, the series depicts human rights crises in the United States and around the world. Voice of Witness also publishes a guide for teaching oral history called *The Power of the Story. Palestine Speaks* is the thirteenth book in the series. The other titles in the series are:

SURVIVING JUSTICE
America's Wrongfully Convicted and Exonerated
Compiled and edited by Lola Vollen and Dave Eggers
Foreword by Scott Turow
"Real, raw, terrifying tales of 'justice.'" —*Star Tribune*

These oral histories prove that the problem of wrongful conviction is far-reaching and very real. Through a series of all-too-common circumstances —eyewitness misidentification, inept defense lawyers, coercive interrogation—the lives of these men and women of all different backgrounds were irreversibly disrupted. In *Surviving Justice*, thirteen exonerees describe their experiences—the events that led to their convictions, their years in prison, and the process of adjusting to their new lives outside.

VOICES FROM THE STORM
The People of New Orleans on Hurricane Katrina and Its Aftermath
Compiled and edited by Chris Ying and Lola Vollen
"*Voices from the Storm* uses oral history to let those who survived the hurricane tell their (sometimes surprising) stories." —*Independent UK*

Voices from the Storm is a chronological account of the worst natural disaster in modern American history. Thirteen New Orleanians describe the

days leading up to Hurricane Katrina, the storm itself, and the harrowing confusion of the days and months afterward. Their stories weave and intersect, ultimately creating an eye-opening portrait of courage in the face of terror, and of hope amid nearly complete devastation.

UNDERGROUND AMERICA
Narratives of Undocumented Lives
Compiled and edited by Peter Orner
Foreword by Luis Alberto Urrea
"No less than revelatory." —*Publishers Weekly*

They arrive from around the world for countless reasons. Many come simply to make a living. Others are fleeing persecution in their native countries. But by living and working in the U.S. without legal status, millions of immigrants risk deportation and imprisonment. *Underground America* presents the remarkable oral histories of men and women struggling to carve a life for themselves in the United States. In 2010, *Underground America* was translated into Spanish and released as *En las Sombras de Estados Unidos*.

OUT OF EXILE
The Abducted and Displaced People of Sudan
Compiled and edited by Craig Walzer
Additional interviews and an introduction by Dave Eggers and Valentino Achak Deng
"Riveting." —*School Library Journal*

Millions of people have fled from conflicts in all parts of Sudan, and many thousands more have been enslaved as human spoils of war. In *Out of Exile*, refugees and abductees recount their escapes from the wars in Darfur and South Sudan, from political and religious persecution, and from abduction by militias. They tell of life before the war, and of the hope that they might someday find peace again.

HOPE DEFERRED
Narratives of Zimbabwean Lives
Compiled and edited by Peter Orner and Annie Holmes

Foreword by Brian Chikwava
"*Hope Deferred* might be the most important publication to have come out of Zimbabwe in the last thirty years." —*Harper's Magazine*

The fifth volume in the Voice of Witness series presents the narratives of Zimbabweans whose lives have been affected by the country's political, economic, and human rights crises. This book asks the question: How did a country with so much promise—a stellar education system, a growing middle class of professionals, a sophisticated economic infrastructure, a liberal constitution, and an independent judiciary—go so wrong?

NOWHERE TO BE HOME
Narratives from Survivors of Burma's Military Regime
Compiled and edited by Maggie Lemere and Zoë West
Foreword by Mary Robinson
"Extraordinary." —The Asia Society

Decades of military oppression in Burma have led to the systematic destruction of thousands of ethnic-minority villages, a standing army with one of the world's highest numbers of child soldiers, and the displacement of millions of people. *Nowhere to Be Home* is an eye-opening collection of oral histories exposing the realities of life under military rule. In their own words, men and women from Burma describe their lives in the country that Human Rights Watch has called "the textbook example of a police state."

PATRIOT ACTS
Narratives of Post-9/11 Injustice
Compiled and edited by Alia Malek
Foreword by Karen Korematsu
"Important and timely." —Reza Aslan

Patriot Acts tells the stories of men and women who have been needlessly swept up in the War on Terror. In their own words, narrators recount personal experiences of the post-9/11 backlash that has deeply altered their lives and communities. *Patriot Acts* illuminates these experiences in a compelling collection of eighteen oral histories from men and women who have found themselves subject to a wide range of human and civil rights

abuses—from rendition and torture, to workplace discrimination, bullying, FBI surveillance, and harassment.

INSIDE THIS PLACE, NOT OF IT
Narratives from Women's Prisons
Compiled and edited by Ayelet Waldman and Robin Levi
Foreword by Michelle Alexander
"These stories are a gift." —Michelle Alexander

Inside This Place, Not of It reveals some of the most egregious human rights violations within women's prisons in the United States. In their own words, the thirteen narrators in this book recount their lives leading up to incarceration and their experiences inside—ranging from forced sterilization and shackling during childbirth, to physical and sexual abuse by prison staff. Together, their testimonies illustrate the harrowing struggles for survival that women in prison must endure.

THROWING STONES AT THE MOON
Narratives of Colombians Displaced by Violence
Compiled and edited by Sibylla Brodzinsky and Max Schoening
Foreword by Íngrid Betancourt
"Both sad and inspiring." —*Publishers Weekly*

For nearly five decades, Colombia has been embroiled in internal armed conflict among guerrilla groups, paramilitary militias, and the country's own military. Civilians in Colombia have to make their lives despite the threat of torture, kidnapping, and large-scale massacres—and more than four million have had to flee their homes. The oral histories in *Throwing Stones at the Moon* describe the most widespread of Colombia's human rights crises: forced displacement. Speakers recount life before displacement, the reasons for their flight, and their struggle to rebuild their lives.

REFUGEE HOTEL
Compiled and edited by Juliet Linderman and Gabriele Stabile
"There is no other book like *Refugee Hotel* on your shelf." —*SF Weekly*

Refugee Hotel is a groundbreaking collection of photography and interviews that documents the arrival of refugees in the United States. Evocative images are coupled with moving testimonies from people describing their first days in the U.S., the lives they've left behind, and the new communities they've since created.

HIGH RISE STORIES
Voices from Chicago Public Housing
Compiled and edited by Audrey Petty
Foreword by Alex Kotlowitz
"Joyful, novelistic, and deeply moving." —George Saunders

In the gripping first-person accounts of *High Rise Stories*, former residents of Chicago's iconic public housing projects describe life in the now-demolished high rises. These stories of community, displacement, and poverty in the wake of gentrification give voice to those who have long been ignored.

INVISIBLE HANDS
Voices from the Global Economy
Compiled and edited by Corinne Goria
Foreword by Kalpona Akter
"Powerful and revealing testimony . . ." —*Kirkus*

In this oral history collection, electronics manufacturers in China, miners in Africa, garment workers in Mexico, and farmers in India—among many others—reveal the human rights crises occurring behind the scenes of the global economy.

THE POWER OF THE STORY
The Voice of Witness Teacher's Guide to Oral History
Compiled and edited by Cliff Mayotte
Foreword by William and Richard Ayers
"A rich source of provocations to engage with human dramas throughout the world." —*Rethinking Schools Magazine*

This comprehensive guide allows teachers and students to explore contemporary issues through oral history, and to develop the communication skills necessary for creating vital oral history projects in their own communities.